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ALEXANDER DUMAS'S WORKS

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Sent, post-paid, on receipt of 10 cents per copy.

Monsieur De Chauvelin's Will.

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BY

ALEXANDER DUMAS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY

MARY STUART SMITH.

35

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MONSIEUR DE CHAUVELIN'S WILL.

I.

THE HOUSE ON VAUGIRARD STREET.

On going from the Rue Cherche-Midi to Notre-Dame-des-Champs, there is found, to the left, facing a fountain at the corner of the Rue Regard and Vaugirard, a small house listed on the municipal registers of the city under the number 84.

And now, before going further, a confession that I was hesitating to make. That house, where the sincerest friendship received me, almost immediately after my arrival from the country; that house, where I was treated like a brother for three years; that house, which I could have gone straight to with my eyes shut when, in times of joy or sorrow, I went there for the sympathy that was so surely found; well, in order to explain to my readers its topographical situation, I have just been obliged to have recourse to a plan of the city of Paris.

Who would have made me believe such a thing twenty years ago?

This is because, in the course of twenty years also, so many events, like an ever-rising tide, have stolen from the men of our generation the recollections of their youth; because it is no longer with the memory that we must recollect—memory has its twilight in which past events are lost—but with the heart.

Thus, when I lay aside my memory to take refuge in my heart, I find there again, as in the sacred tabernacle, all the secret sensations which have escaped, one by one, from my life, as, drop by drop, water filters through the fissures of a vase; in the heart there is no twilight becoming more and more misty, but a dawn becoming more and

more brilliant. Memory tends to obscurity—that is to say, to nothingness; the heart tends to life—that is to say, to God.

There it is, though, that small house shut in by a gray wall, behind which it is half hid—for sale, I am told—soon to escape, alas! from the hospitable hands that used to open to me its doors.

Let me tell you how I came to be introduced there. That leads us by a turn that I well know to the story that I am telling you; but never mind, follow me; we shall talk as we go along, and I'll try to make the road seem less long than it is in reality.

It was toward the end of 1826, I believe. You see, I stated it to you as twenty years ago, and lo! it has been twenty-two. I had just completed my twenty-third year, for my own part.

While upon the subject of Jean Jacques Rousseau, I told you about my literary dreams. Already in 1826 they had become more ambitious. I was no longer busy over "The Chase and Love," which I had done in collaboration with Adolphe de Leuven; I was no longer composing "Marriage and Burial" with Vulplan and Lasagne, but it was "Christine" that absorbed me solely. Beautiful dream! One resplendent, in fact, that, in my youthful hopes, was to open to me the garden of Hesperus, that garden with golden fruit for which Criticism acts the dragon.

Meanwhile—poor Hercules that I was—Necessity had put a world upon my shoulders. A wicked goddess, that Necessity, who had not even, like Atlas, the pretext of resting an hour while crushing me.

No, Necessity was crushing me—me and so many others—just as I crush an ant-hill. Why? Who knows? Because I chanced to be under her foot, and because the chilly goddess in the chimney-corner, her eyes being shut, did not see me.

This world that she had placed on my shoulders was my clerkship.

I earned one hundred and twenty-five francs a month; and here is what I had to do to earn one hundred and twenty-five francs a month.

I went to my office about ten o'clock; I quitted it at five; but in summer I returned there at seven o'clock and left at ten.

Why that increase of work in summer, at that time when it would have been so pleasant to breathe the pure air of the country or the intoxicating atmosphere of the theaters?

I am going to tell you how it was. The portfolio of the Duke of Orleans had to be attended to.

That aid-de-camp of Dumouriez at Jemmapes and at Valmy, that exile of 1792, that college professor of Reichenau, that traveler to Cape Horn, that American citizen, that prince who was the friend of Foy, Manuel, Laffitte, and Lafayette, that king of 1830, that refugee of 1848, was still called at that period "the Duke of Orleans."

It was the happy time of his life. As I had my dream, he had his. My dream, kept to myself, was success; his dream, kept to himself, was the throne.

My God! have mercy on the king! My God! grant the old man peace! My God! grant to the husband and father all that is left for him of conjugal and parental blessedness in the infinite treasures of your goodness.

Alas! at Dieux I have seen that crowned father weep over the tomb of that son whom he had hoped would wear a crown.

Is it not true, sire, that your lost crown did not cost you as many tears as your dead child?

Let us go back to the Duke of Orleans and his portfolio. That portfolio was the day's dispatches and the evening journals that he had to send to Neuilly.

Then, the portfolio being sent by a courier on horseback, the answer had to be waited for.

It was the last comer to the office who was charged with this task, and as I was the last comer, it had fallen to my share.

My comrade, Ernest Banet, was intrusted with the morning dispatches.

We took by turns the Sunday's portfolio.

Then, one evening, in the space that intervened between the portfolio dispatched and the one that was to arrive, I was scribbling a few lines of "Christine," when my office door flew open, a fine head, covered with flaxen curls, appeared, and a voice, with slightly mocking accent, uttered in rather harsh tones these three monosyllables:

"Are you there?"

"Yes," I responded, briskly; "come in."

I had recognized Cordelier Delanoue, like myself, the

son of an old general of the republic; like myself, a poet. Why has he succeeded less well than myself in the career that we have traversed? I can not imagine. He certainly has as much mind as I have, and makes indisputably better verses than I.

The caprice of chance. All is luck or ill-luck in this world; but only at the moment of death will it be ascertained which of us two, whether he or I, has had good or ill-fortune.

But that visit of Cordelier Delanoue was a bit of good fortune. Like all the persons whom I have loved, I loved him then and I love him still; only I love him more, and am sure that it is the same way with him.

He came to ask me if I would go with him to the Athenæum to hear I do not know what lecture on I do not know what subject.

The lecturer was Monsieur de Villenave.

I knew Monsieur de Villenave only by name. I knew that he had made an esteemed translation of Ovid; that he had formerly been secretary for Monsieur de Malesherbes and tutor to Monsieur de Chauvelin's children.

At that period, theater-going and amusements were rare things with me. All those theater and parlor doors that have since opened to the author of "Henri III." and "Christine" were closed to the humble clerk in charge of the Duke of Orleans' evening portfolio. I accepted, begging Delanoue, however, to wait with me for the mail carrier's arrival.

Meanwhile, he read me an ode that he had just composed. It was a preparation for the lecture at the Athenæum.

The courier returned. I was free, and we set out for the Rue de Valois.

To tell you at what part of the Rue de Valois the Athenæum held its sessions would be impossible. I believe that this was the only time that I ever went there. I have never had much relish for those reunions, where a single individual talks and everybody else listens. The subject discussed must either be very interesting or new to the audience, and he who speaks must either be very eloquent or have fine descriptive powers for me to find this one-sided discourse at all attractive, where contradiction is unconventional and criticism impolite.

I have never been able to hear to the end either preacher or orator. There is always a turn of the discourse upon which I get hung, and that causes me to draw a halt in my own thought while he goes on his way. Once stopped, I very naturally consider the thing from my own point of view, to myself; so that I make my speech or sermon in silence, while he makes his out loud. Both having reached the conclusion, we are often a hundred leagues apart from each other, although we have set out from the same point.

It is the same case with theatrical performances. Unless I am present at a first representation of a play made for Arnal, Grassot or Ravel—that is to say, a work which is entirely outside of my habits of thought, and for the composition of which I simply recognize my incapacity—I am the worst spectator in the world at the first presentation of a new play. If the play is imaginative, hardly have the characters been introduced before they are no longer the author's, but my own. Instead of the unknown, with whom I am to get acquainted in four acts, I introduce them into four acts of my own composition; I carry out my conception of their characters, and utilize their originality; if the interval between the acts lasts only ten minutes, it is more than I require for the construction of a castle in the air, into which I conduct them, and it is with my dramatic castle in the air, as it was with the lecture or sermon of which I spoke just now. My secretly constructed castle is hardly ever the same as that of the author; therefore, as of my dream I have made a reality, reality becomes like a dream to me—a dream that I am up in arms to combat, saying: "But that is not the way, Monsieur Author," "You have not got it right, Mademoiselle Honorine," "You are going too fast or too slow," "You are turning to the left instead of to the right," "You say yes when you should say no," "Oh! oh! oh! but that is unbearable!"

In the case of historical plays, it is much worse. Naturally my play is altogether built upon the title; and as it is of course constructed with all the faultiness of my style —that is to say, with an abundance of details, absolute rigidity of characters, and double, triple, quadruple intrigue—it is very rarely that my play resembles the least in the world that which is being acted. This is what makes a veritable punishment for me of what furnishes others with amusement.

My fellows have learned my peculiarity, so that now, if they invite me to the first presentation of their play to the public, they know what to expect.

I did that evening to Monsieur de Villenave as I do to everybody. However, as he had finished three quarters of his lecture before I arrived, I began by looking at him instead of listening to him.

He was then a tall old man, between sixty-four and sixty-five years of age, with fine locks of silvery white hair, a pale complexion, and lively black eyes; his dress had that sort of elegant negligence belonging to toilers who dress once or twice a week, that is all, and who, during the rest of the time, keep on old footed pantaloons, a loose old gown, and slipshod shoes in the dust of their studies. That Sunday suit, with its shirt of many little plaits and ruffled bosom, with its well-ironed white cravat, shows the hand of wife or daughter—the housekeeper, in short, who has gotten it up so nicely. That well-scoured, well-brushed suit is a sort of protestation made by her against that horrid every-day clothing which shuns the whisk and dusting-brush with genuine dread.

Monsieur de Villenave had on a blue coat with gilt buttons, black pantaloons, white waistcoat, and a white cravat. What a strange machine is thought—an intellectual wheel-work that goes on and stops in spite of us, because it is the hand of God that winds it up; a clock that, according to its whim, strikes the hours of the past and occasionally those of the future.

What was it that arrested my thoughts the moment I set eyes upon Monsieur de Villenave? Was it, as I said just now, some turn of his discourse? No; it was an incident of his life.

I had once upon a time read, I know not where, a pamphlet of Monsieur de Villenave, published in 1793, entitled "Account of a Journey Made by One Hundred and Thirty-two Men of Nantes."

It was to this episode of Monsieur de Villnave's life that my mind had clung fast upon seeing Monsieur de Villenave for the first time.

In fact, Monsieur de Villenave had been a resident of Nantes in 1793—that is to say, at the same time as Jean Baptiste Carrier, of bloody memory.

There he had seen the proconsul, finding trials too long

and the guillotine too slow, suppress proceedings at law altogether, seeing that they were useless besides, since they never spared the guilty, and substitute for the guillotine boats with a valve. Perhaps he was on the quay of the Loire when, on the 15th of November, 1793, Carrier, as a first trial of his *republican baths* and *vertical deportations*—such were the names that he gave to the new kind of punishment invented by him—caused ninety-four priests to embark, under pretext of transporting them to Belle Isle; perhaps he was on the river-bank when the horrified stream threw upon its shores the ninety-four corpses of these men of God; perhaps, too, he was revolted at that spectacle which at the end of some time—being repeated every night—had polluted the water to such an extent that people were prohibited from drinking it; perhaps, more imprudent still, he had aided in giving burial to some one of these first victims, who were to be followed by so many others; but anyhow, it had happened that one morning Monsieur de Villenave had been arrested, cast into prison, and destined, like his companions, to do his part toward polluting the waters of the river, when Carrier changed his mind. He had made choice of a hundred and thirty-two prisoners, all condemned, and had ordered them off to Paris as a homage from country scaffolds to the guillotine of the capital; then no sooner had they set out, than Carrier again changed his mind—without doubt the homage had not appeared sufficient to him—and he sent orders to Captain Boussard, commandant of the escort, to shoot his hundred and thirty-two prisoners on arriving at Ancenis.

Boussard was a brave man, who did nothing of the sort, and went on his way to Paris.

Carrier learning this, sent orders to the conventionalist Hentz, who was proconsul at Angers, to stop Boussard as he passed by, and to cast the hundred and thirty-two men of Nantes into the water.

Hentz did have Boussard arrested; but when it came to drowning one hundred and thirty-two prisoners, the brass of his revolutionary heart—which was not triple plated, it seems—melted, and he commanded the victims to go on their way to Paris.

This caused Carrier to say, as he contemptuously shook his head: "A small drowner is that man Hentz! a small drowner!"

The prisoners then went on their way. Of a hundred and thirty-two, thirty-six perished before reaching Paris, and the ninety-six who arrived, happily for them, arrived just in time to appear as witnesses in the trial of Carrier, instead of answering as the accused in their own trial.

This was because the 9th of Thermidor had come, because the day of reprisals had come—the time had come for the judges to be judged, and because the Convention, after a month of hesitation, had just called the "great drowner" to account.

The result was that at the memory of that pamphlet, which Monsieur de Villenave had published thirty-four years before in his prison, I lived again in the past. What I heard was no longer a literary discourse pronounced by a professor of the Athenæum, but a terrible, vehement, deadly accusation of the weak against the strong, of the accused against the judge, of the victim against the executioner.

And such is the power of the imagination, that hall, spectators, platform, all were transformed. The hall of the Athenæum had become the hall of the Convention; the peaceful hearers were changed into angry avengers, and the eloquent professor, with his honeyed periods, was thundering forth a public accusation, demanding the death of Carrier, and regretting that Carrier had only one life, insufficient as it was, to pay for the fifteen thousand existences that he had cut short.

And I could see Carrier, with his dark frown, furiously repelling the accusation; and I was listening to him as he shouted to his old colleagues with his strident voice:

"Why blame me to-day for what you ordered me to do yesterday? In accusing me does not the Convention accuse itself? My condemnation is the condemnation of you all. Think of it! You will all be enveloped in the proscription which shall envelop me. If I am guilty, every creature here is guilty; yes, all! all! all! even down to the president's little bell!"

But, nevertheless, they put it to the vote; nevertheless, he was condemned. The same terror which had urged into action urged into reaction, and the guillotine, after having drunk the blood of the condemned, was calmly drinking the blood of judges and executioners.

I had buried my head in my hands, as if it would have

been repugnant to me, shockingly bloodthirsty as nad been this man, to see inflicted upon him that death which he had been so free in meting out to others.

Delanoue tapped me on the shoulder.

"It is over," said he.

"Ah!" answered I, "he is executed, then?"

"Whom do you mean?"

"That abominable Carrier."

"Yes, yes, yes," said Delanoue, "and only thirty-six years have elapsed since that little misfortune befell him."

"Ah!" said I, "you did well to awaken me; I was having the nightmare."

"Were you asleep, then?"

"At least I was dreaming."

"The devil! I'll not tell that to Monsieur de Villenave, to whose house I am going to take you, where we'll have a cup of tea."

"Ah! you may tell him if you choose. Go. I'll tell him my dream, and he will not be at all angry."

Upon this, Delanoue, still uncertain whether I was fully awake, drew me out of the empty hall and led me into a waiting-room, where Monsieur de Villenave was receiving the congratulations of his friends.

Arrived there, I was first presented to Monsieur de Villenave, then to his daughter, Madame Mélanie Waldor, then to Monsieur Theodore de Villenave, his son.

Then everybody set out on foot by the Bridge of the Arts to the Faubourg St. Germain.

After a half hour's walk we had arrived, and one after the other disappeared into that house on the Rue de Vaugirard of which I have spoken at the beginning of this chapter, and of the interior of which I am going to try and give you a description after having roughly sketched its exterior.

II.

A PASTEL BY LATOUR.

THE house had a character of its own, borrowed from the character of its occupant.

We have said that its walls were gray—we should have said that they were black.

The entrance was through a large door cutting the wall

and placed beside the porter's lodge; then one found himself in a garden without flower-beds, neglected in every part, having grape-vines without grapes, arbors without shade, and trees almost entirely bereft of foliage. If perchance a flower sprung up in a corner, it was one of those wild flowers almost ashamed to show itself in town, and which, having mistaken this damp, dark spot for a little desert, had put its head out there by mistake, believing itself further than it really was from the habitation of men, and which was immediately plucked by a charming, rosy-cheeked child with flaxen curls, that seemed like a cherub fallen from the sky and lost in this corner of the world.

From this garden, that might measure forty or fifty feet square, and which terminated in a broad strip of pavement extending to the house, one passed into a corridor paved with tiles.

Upon this corridor, at the back of which was a staircase, opened four doors; the first, to the left, belonged to the dining-room, then that to the right to a small room. Then, again to the left, that of the kitchen, and to the right that of the store-room and office.

This ground-floor, somber and damp, was hardly ever used but at meal-times.

The actual dwelling, into which we were introduced, was on the first floor. This first floor was composed of the stair-landing, a small reception-room and large parlor, besides the bedrooms of Madame Waldor and Madame de Villenave.

The parlor was remarkable in its shape and furniture.

It was a long rectangle, having at each of its corners a pier-table and a bust.

One of these busts was that of Monsieur de Villenave.

Between the two busts, at the back, over a pier-table fronting the fire-place, was the most important specimens of art and archeology in the parlor.

It was the bronze urn containing the heart of Bayard. A small bas-relief running around its circumference showed the chevalier "without fear and without reproach" kissing the handle of his sword.

Two large pictures came next; one by Holbein, representing Anne Boleyn; the other by Claude Lorraine, representing an Italian landscape.

I believe that the two frames hanging opposite to these paintings inclosed, one of them, the portrait of Madame de Montespan, and the other a portrait of Madame de Sévigné or Madame de Grignan.

Furniture upholstered in Utrecht velvet offered to friends of the family its large sofas, with their white and slender arms, and to strangers its divans and chairs.

This story was the peculiar domain of Madame Waldor, where she exercised her viceroyalty.

We say her viceroyalty, because in reality, despite her father's abandonment to her of this parlor, she was only its vice-queen.

As soon as Monsieur de Villenave entered, he resumed the sovereignty of it, and from that moment the reins of conversation belonged to him.

There was something despotic in Monsieur de Villenave's conversation, which extended itself from the family to strangers. One felt on entering Monsieur de Villenave's house, that one became a part of the property of that man who had seen, studied, and knew so much. That despotism, tempered as it was by the courtesy that befits a host, weighed, however, in an oppressive manner upon the whole social circle gathering there. Perhaps when Monsieur de Villenave was present the conversation was better handled, as they used to express it; but most assuredly it was less free, amusing, and witty than when he was not there.

It was quite the contrary in Nodier's salon. Nodier's presence always made everybody feel more at home.

Fortunately Monsieur de Villenave seldom came down into the parlor. That gentleman habitually stayed in his own apartments—that is to say, on the second story—and ordinarily made his appearance only at dinner; then, when he had talked awhile after dinner, when he had moralized a little with his son and scolded his wife a little, he would stretch himself out in his easy-chair, close his eyes, have his hair put up in papers by his daughter, and then go back upstairs.

That quarter of an hour during which the teeth of the comb were gently scratching his head was the quarter of an hour of bliss that Monsieur de Villenave daily allowed himself.

But why those curl-papers? the reader will ask.

In the first place, maybe it was only a pretext for getting his head combed.

Then, in the second place, Monsieur de Villenave, as we have said, was a splendid-looking old man, who must formerly have been a handsome young one, and his face, with its strongly marked features, was most becomingly framed in those waves of fluffy white hair that enhanced so much the brilliancy of his large dark eyes.

Finally it must be owned that, although a learned man, Monsieur de Villenave was vain, but vain of his head; that was all.

The rest mattered little to him. Whether his coat were blue or black, his pantaloons wide or narrow, his boots round- or square-toed, all that was the affair of his tailor, boot-maker, or, rather, of his daughter, who presided over all these details.

Provided that his hair was well dressed, he was satisfied.

It is Monsieur de Villenave "at home," as the English express it, that I am going to try and describe, without hope, though, of success.

That second floor, divided into infinitely more apartments than the first, was composed, in the first place, of a stair-landing adorned by busts in plaster, an antechamber, and four rooms.

We shall not divide these four rooms into parlor, bedroom, study, dressing-room, etc.

What use had Monsieur de Villenave for all these superfluities? No; there were five rooms for books and portfolios; that was all.

These five rooms might contain, perhaps, forty thousand volumes and four thousand portfolios.

The antechamber already by itself formed an enormous library. It had two openings. Of these two modes of access, the one on the right opened into Monsieur de Villenave's sleeping-room, which room itself, by a passage running along the alcove, opened into a large closet lighted by day as a matter of toleration.

The one on the left opened into a large room leading into a smaller one.

This large room opening into a smaller one, like the one next it, not only had its four walls lined with book-cases full of books and supported by bases of pasteboard boxes, but a very ingenious construction besides, like the center

ottoman that one sees in reception-rooms, so placed that persons can sit all around on it. Thanks to this erection, the middle of the room, which presented a second library inside a first one, left only a rectangular space free, in which a single person might move about freely. A second person would have hindered circulation; it was very rarely, too, that Monsieur de Villenave introduced any one, even an intimate friend, into this "holy of holies."

A few privileged parties had stuck their heads through the door; and across the learned dust that was incessantly whirling around like luminous atoms in the rare rays of sunshine that penetrated into this tabernacle, they had been able to perceive the bibliographical mysteries of Monsieur de Villenave, as Claudius—thanks to his disguise of woman's attire—had been able, in the atrium of the Temple of Isis, to surprise some of the mysteries of that good goddess.

Here he kept his autographs. The age of Louis XIV. alone occupied five hundred portfolios.

Here were the papers of Louis XVI., the correspondence of Malesherbes, four hundred autographs of Voltaire, two hundred of Rousseau. Here were the genealogies of all the noble families of France, with their alliances and their proofs. Here were kept drawings of Raphael, Jules Romain, Leonardo da Vinci, Andreas del Sarte, Lebrun, Lesueur, David and Lethière; collections of minerals, rare plants, and unique manuscripts.

In short, here was shown the result of fifty years of labor, occupied with only one idea, day by day, absorbed hour after hour by one single passion—that passion at once so gentle and so ardent that possesses the soul of the collector, and into which the collector throws his mind, his joy, his happiness, and his life.

Those two rooms were precious rooms. Most assuredly Monsieur de Villenave, who had more than once narrowly escaped giving his life for nothing, would not have parted with those two rooms for a hundred thousand crowns.

There remained the sleeping-room and dark closet, situated to the right of the antechamber, and lying, as it were, parallel to the two rooms that we have just described.

The first of these rooms was Monsieur de Villenave's bedroom, a chamber in which the bed was certainly the least conspicuous object in it, put back, as it was, in an alcove over which closed two doors of carved wood.

In this room it was that Monsieur de Villenave received.

Here, too, if compelled to, one could walk; here, too, if compelled to, one could sit down.

Here is the way in which one could sit down, and this the condition under which one could walk there.

The old servant woman, whose name I no longer recall, poking her head in at the door, announced a visitor for Monsieur de Villenave.

This opening of his door always surprised Monsieur de Villenave in the midst of some classification, a reverie, or a nap.

"Eh! What is it, Fanny?" (We'll suppose that her name was Fanny.) "Dear me! Can not they leave a fellow a minute's rest?"

"Don't think hard of me, sir. I had to come—"

"Come, talk fast! What do you want of me? How does it happen that it is always just when I am busiest—Well?"

And Monsieur de Villenave raised his big eyes heavenward with an expression of despair, crossing his hands, and uttering a sigh of resignation.

Fanny was accustomed to the situation; she let Monsieur de Villenave go through with his pantomime and his asides. Then when he had got through:

"Sir," said she, "Mr. Such-a-One has called to pay you a little visit."

"I am not at home. Be off!"

Fanny would slowly draw the door to after her. She knew her duty.

"Wait, Fanny," resumed Monsieur de Villenave.

"Sir?"

Fanny opened the door again.

"You say that it is Mr. Such-a-One, Fanny?"

"Yes, sir."

"Ah, well! Let us see. Bring him in; then if he stays too long, you can come and say that I am wanted. Go, Fanny."

Fanny shut the door again.

"Dear me! dear me! Is it credible?" murmured Monsieur de Villenave. "I never go abroad to worry anybody, and yet somebody has always to be disturbing me."

Fanny reopened the door and introduced the visitor.

"Ah! how do you do, my friend?" said Monsieur de

Villenave. "You are welcome; come in, come in! How long it has been since I saw you! Sit down, pray."

"Upon what?" asked the visitor.

"Why, upon what you like, of course—on the sofa."

"Willingly; but—"

Monsieur de Villenave cast his eyes upon the sofa.

"Ah! yes, that's so; it is filled up with books," said he. "Ah, well, bring forward an arm-chair."

"I should do so with pleasure; but—"

Monsieur de Villenave cast a look around upon his arm-chairs.

"That is true," said he; "but what would you have, my dear sir? I don't know where to put my books. Take a common chair."

"I should ask for nothing better; but—"

"But what? Are you in a hurry?"

"No common seat is empty, any more than an arm-chair."

"That is incredible!" said Monsieur de Villenave, raising his eyes to heaven—"that is incredible! Wait!"

And he would quit his place with a groan, would carefully take up the books which put one chair out of service, and would deposit the said books on the floor, where they would add a pile to twenty or thirty similar piles with which the floor of the room was heaped, then he would bring that chair near to his own arm-chair—that is to say, to the corner of the fire-place.

I have just told under what conditions one could sit down in this room, and I shall furthermore tell under what conditions one could walk.

It happened occasionally that at the moment when the visitor entered, and had seated himself after the indispensable preamble had been got through with which we have described, it happened occasionally, I say, that, by a double combination of chance, that the door of the alcove and the passage-door were both open. When, by this double combination of the two doors being open at the same time, the double effect was produced that one could see in the alcove a pastel representing a young and pretty woman holding a letter in her hand—a pastel that was lighted by the streak of daylight that came from the passage window.

Then either the visitor had no appreciation of art—and

it was rare for those who came to see Monsieur de Villenave not to be artistic in some sense—or he would jump up exclaiming:

"Ah, monsieur! What a lovely pastel!"

And the visitor would start to go from the fire-place to the alcove.

"Wait!" Monsieur de Villenave would cry out. "Wait!"

In fact, it was evident that two or three piles of books, tumbled one upon the other, formed a sort of odd-shaped counterscarp that would have to be cleared before the pastel could be reached.

Then Monsieur de Villenave would get up and lead the way; and as a clever miner makes a trench, he would open across the topographical line a passage that brought them in front of the pastel, which in its turn faced his bed.

Arrived there, the visitor would repeat:

"Oh! but that is an exquisite pastel!"

"Yes," Monsieur de Villenave would reply with old-time, courtly air that I have only met with in him and two or three other elegant old men like him, "yes, it is one of Latour's pastels; it represents an old friend of mine who is no longer young—for, as well as I can remember, at the time when I used to know her, in 1784, she used to be my senior by five or six years. Since 1802 we have not met, which does not prevent our writing to each other every eight days, and receiving our weekly letters with an equal pleasure. Yes, you are right, the pastel is charming, but the original was much more charming still. Ah!"

And a ray of youth, pleasant as a sunbeam, passed over the open countenance of the handsome old man, rejuvenated by forty years.

And very often, in that second case, Fanny had no need to come with a false announcement, for if the visitor were well-bred, after a few minutes he would leave Monsieur de Villenave, wholly given up to the reverie awakened in him by the sight of that beautiful pastel of Latour's.

III.

THE LETTER.

Now, how had Monsieur de Villenave accumulated that fine library?

How had he made up a collection of autographs unique in the world of collectors?

By devoting to it the labor of a whole life-time.

In the first place, Monsieur de Villenave had never burned a paper nor torn up a letter.

Summons to learned societies, wedding invitations, funeral notices, all had been kept by him, all classified, all put in their places. He possessed a collection of everything, and even volumes that, on July 14th, had been snatched half-burned from the fire that was consuming them in the yard of the Bastile.

Two searchers after autographs were constantly occupied in Monsieur de Villenave's service. One was a man named Fontaine, that I have met, and who was himself the author of a book entitled "The Manual of Autographers"; the other was an employée of the War Bureau. All the petty tradesmen of Paris knew these two indefatigable visitors, and laid aside for them all the journals that they bought. Among these papers they would select such as they wanted, paying for them fifteen sous by the pound, and afterward Monsieur de Villenave would pay them thirty sous per pound.

Sometimes Monsieur de Villenave would go the rounds for himself. There was no grocer in Paris who did not know him, and who, on seeing him, did not put together for his learned investigation papers hereafter to be bags and horns.

As a matter of course, the days when he went in search of autographs, Monsieur de Villenave had books also on the brain; then, indefatigable bookworm that he was, he would go the whole length of the quays, and there, with both hands in his pantaloons pockets, his tall body bent over, his fine, intelligent head lighted up by desire, his ardent look would dive into the deepest recesses of the stalls, which he was going to search for hidden treasures; for a moment he would turn it over, and when the book was the one upon which he had set his heart, it left the book-stall, not, however, to take its place in the library of Monsieur de Villenave.

There was no place for it there, nor had there been for a long time, and exchanges for drawings or autographs had to be made that might create that place which for the moment was wanting; no, the book was going to take its place

in the garret, which was divided into three compartments —the compartment of the in-octavos to the left, the compartment of the in-quartos to the right, and the compartment of in-folios in the middle.

There was the chaos of which, some day, Monsieur de Villenave was to make a new world something like an Australia or a New Zealand.

Meanwhile, there they were on the floor, thrown one upon the other, lying in dim obscurity.

That garret reminded one of the limbos where were shut up the souls that God sends neither to Paradise nor Hades, because He has purposes with regard to them.

One day the poor house, without apparent cause, trembled to its foundations, uttered a cry, and a crack declared itself; the occupants, frightened, thought that there was an earthquake, and rushed out into the garden.

All was quiet both in the atmosphere and on earth; the fountain continued to flow at the corner of the street; a bird was singing in the highest branches of the tallest tree.

The accident was partial; it came from a cause secret, unknown, inexplicable.

The architect was sent for.

He came, examined the house, sounded it, tested it, and ended by declaring that the accident could have arisen only from excess of weight.

Consequently he asked leave to visit the garret.

But upon making this request, he was met by vehement opposition on the part of Monsieur de Villenave.

Whence came that opposition, which had to yield, however, to the firmness of the architect?

It was because Monsieur de Villenave felt that his buried treasure, so much the more precious as it was almost unknown to himself, ran great danger from this visit.

In fact, in the middle chamber alone there were found twelve hundred folio volumes, weighing nearly eight thousand pounds.

Alas! these twelve hundred folios, that had caused the house to give way, and that threatened to demolish it, had to be sold.

This grievous operation had to be performed in 1822. And in 1826, when I made Monsieur de Villenave's acquaintance, he had not yet entirely recovered from the pain of it, and more than one sigh, of which his family knew

neither the cause nor aim, went out after those dear folios, collected with so much trouble to himself, and now left like children driven away from their father's house, wanderers, orphans, and scattered over the face of the earth.

I have already told how pleasant and hospitable the house on the Rue de Vaugirard ever proved to me. It was so on Madame de Villenave's part, because she was naturally affectionate; on Madame de Waldor's part, because, being a poet herself, she loved poets; on Theodore de Villenave's part, because we two were about the same age, and both at that time of life when one feels the need of pouring out one's affections and receiving a good share in return.

Lastly, on Monsieur de Villenave's part, because, without being an autograph fancier myself, thanks to my father's military career, I was the owner of quite a curious collection of autographs in my own right.

Indeed, my father, having occupied high stations in the army from 1791–1800, having been thrice general-in-chief, he was found to have been in correspondence with all who had played a conspicuous part within that period.

The most curious autographs of this correspondence were those of General Buonaparte. Napoleon did not long adhere to the Italian mode of spelling his family name. Three months after the 13th Vendémière he Frenchified his name and spelled it Bonaparte. Now, in the course of this short space of time, my father had received five or six letters from the young general of the interior. This was the title he assumed after the 13th of Vendémière.

I gave to Monsieur de Villenave one of these autographs, flanked by an autograph of Saint George and one of Cardinal Richelieu; and, thanks to this sacrifice, which was a pleasure for me, I had admission granted me to the second floor.

By degrees I became sufficiently familiar with the family for Fanny no longer to have to announce my coming to Monsieur de Villenave. I would go upstairs alone to the second story. I would knock at the room door, and open as soon as I heard the words "Come in!" and almost always I was well received.

I say almost always, because great passions have their stormy hours.

Suppose that an amateur in autographs who has coveted one precious signature—for instance, one like that of

Robespierre, of which only three or four have been left behind; or Molière, who left only one or two; Shakespeare, who, I believe, has left none at all—ah, well! at the very moment that our collector is about to put his hand upon such a signature, suppose that, by some accident or another, it escapes him, naturally he would be in a state of despair.

Come in upon him at such a moment, though you were his father, his brother, or an angel, and you will see how you will be received; unless, to be sure, that angel, by his power divine, might bring to life that non-existent signature, or make two of that one single signature.

In was in such exceptional cases as these that I had been ill-received by Monsieur de Villenave. Under all other circumstances I was sure of finding a welcome smile, genial recognition, and accommodating memory, even during the week.

I say "during the week," because with Monsieur de Villenave Sunday was reserved for scientific visitors.

All foreign bibliophilists and autograph collectors coming to Paris never failed to pay their respects to Monsieur de Villenave as vassals go to do homage to their suzerain.

Sunday, then, was the day for exchanges. Thanks to these exchanges, Monsieur de Villenave had nearly completed those foreign collections with which his tradespeople could not supply him, by abandoning to German, English, or American collectors a few clippings from his national wealth.

I was an *habitué* of the house then. I had first been received on the first floor, then on the second; I had been invited to come every Sunday; then, lastly, to come whenever I chose—I privilege that I shared at most with two or three persons.

Now, one week-day—it was Tuesday, I believe, as I had come to beg Monsieur de Villenave to let me study one of Christine's autographs (you know I love to study out the character of persons from their handwriting)—one day, I say, when I had come with this object in view; it was about five o'clock in the afternoon in the month of March, I rang the door-bell. I asked for Monsieur de Villenave and passed on.

As I was going into the house, Fanny called me back.

"What is it, Fanny?" asked I.

"Is it the ladies you wish to see, sir, or monsieur?"

"I am going to monsieur's room, Fanny."

"Well, sir, if you would be so good as to hand this letter, which has just come for him, to Monsieur de Villenave, it would save my poor limbs from climbing up two flights of stairs."

"Gladly, Fanny."

Fanny gave me the letter, which I took and went upstairs.

Arrived at the door, I knocked as was my custom, but received no reply.

I knocked a little louder.

The same silence.

At last I knocked a third time, and this time with a sort of uneasiness, for the key was in the door, and the presence of the key in the door invariably indicated that Monsieur de Villenave was in his room.

I took it upon me then to open the door, and beheld Monsieur de Villenave asleep in his arm-chair.

From the noise that I made, perhaps from the column of air that entered and which broke certain magnetic influences, Monsieur de Villenave uttered a sort of cry.

"I beg your pardon," cried I, "a hundred times I beg pardon. I have been indiscreet and disturbed you."

"Who are you? What do you want of me?"

"I am Alexander Dumas."

"Ah!"

And Monsieur de Villenave drew a long breath.

"Indeed I am in despair," added I, "and am going to withdraw."

"No," said Monsieur de Villenave, uttering a sigh and passing his hand across his forehead. "No; come in!"

I went in.

"Take a seat."

A chair chanced to be vacant, and I took it.

"You see," said he. "Oh! how strange it is! I had fallen asleep. It was twilight; at the same time my fire went out; you woke me up; I found myself without any light, and could not account for the sound that disturbed my sleep; undoubtedly it was the current from the door sweeping over my face; but I seemed to see the winding of a large white sheet, something like a shroud. How strange! Isn't it?" continued Monsieur de Villenave,

with that shuddering of the whole frame which shows that a man is thoroughly chilled. "You are here; so much the better!"

"You say that to console me for my awkwardness."

"No, indeed; I am very glad to see you. What have you there?"

"Ah! pardon me, I forgot; a letter for you."

"Ah! an autograph—from whom?"

"No, it is not an autograph; so far as I know, it is simply a letter."

"Ah! yes, a letter."

"A letter that came by mail, and which Fanny asked me to deliver to you. Here it is."

"Thanks. Stop, if you please. Put out your hand and give me—"

"What?"

"A match. Indeed I am all bewildered still. If I were superstitious, I should believe in presentiments."

He took the match that I offered him, and lighted it from the red coals in the fire-place.

By degrees, as it kindled, an increasing light was shed abroad through the apartment, and permitted me to distinguish objects.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed I all of a sudden.

"What is the matter?" asked Monsieur de Villenave, lighting the wax candle.

"Oh! oh! Your beautiful pastel—what has happened to it?"

"Yes, you see," sadly replied Monsieur de Villenave, "I have set it near the fire-place. I'll have to call in the glazier and the framer."

"Indeed, the frame is broken and the glass shivered into a thousand bits."

"Yes," said Monsieur de Villenave, regarding the portrait with a melancholy air, and forgetting his letter; "yes, it is an incomprehensible affair."

"But some accident has befallen it?"

"Call it up in your mind that day before yesterday I had been working the whole evening through. It lacked fifteen minutes of midnight, and I went to bed, putting my candle on my night-stand, and was making ready to go over the proofs of a small, compact edition of my Ovid, when my eyes chanced to fall upon the portrait of my poor

friend. I bowed good-night to her, as was my custom. A breeze came in through a window left open, no doubt causing the flame of my candle to waver so that it seemed to me that the portrait nodded a good-night to me by a movement of the head similar to my own. You understand that I considered that vision as folly; but I know not how it was, I could not get the idea out of my mind, and my eyes were riveted upon the frame. You see how it is, my friend, that pastel carries me back to the first days of my youth, and revives within me all sorts of memories. There I was then, deep in reminiscences of twenty-five years ago. I began talking to my portrait; it seemed as if the lips of the pastel stirred; then its colors seemed to fade away and the countenance to assume a sad expression. At that moment midnight began to strike from the Carmelite church-tower; from looking sad, the countenance of my poor friend grew more and more melancholy. The wind blew. At the last stroke of twelve, the closet window was violently opened. I heard something like a passing wail, and it seemed to me that the eyes of the portrait closed. The nail that supported it broke down, the portrait fell to the floor, and my wax candle went out. I got up to light it again, having no fear whatever, but nevertheless strongly impressed. As ill-luck would have it, I could not find another match, and it was too late to call a servant. I shut my closet window and lay down again without a light. All that had greatly moved me, and I felt very sad. I experienced an incredible disposition to shed tears, and it seemed to me that I heard something in the room like the rustling of a silk gown. Several times I asked: 'Is any one there?' At last I fell asleep, but late; and on awakening I found my poor pastel in the condition in which you see it."

"Oh! what a strange thing!" said I to him. "And have you received your weekly letter?"

"What letter?"

"The one that the original of the portrait has been accustomed to write you."

"No; and that is what makes me uneasy; that is why I had bidden Fanny bring or send up without delay any letters that might come for me."

"Well, how about this one that I brought you?"

"That is not her way of folding them."

"Ah!"

"But never mind; she is from Angers."

"Did she live at Angers?"

"Yes. Ah! my God! Sealed with black! Poor friend! Can any accident have befallen her?"

And Monsieur de Villenave turned pale while he was breaking the seal.

At the first words that he read, his eyes filled with tears.

He took out a second letter, inclosed in the first, that broke off at its fourth line.

He carried this unfinished letter to his lips, and offered me the other.

"Read it," said he.

I read:

"SIR,—It is with grief on my own account, augmented by what I know you will suffer, when I tell you that Madame —— died last Sunday, just as the last stroke of the clock told that it was midnight.

"The evening before, just as she was beginning a letter to you, she was seized with an indisposition which at first we supposed was only a slight one, but it kept on increasing until the moment of her death.

"I have the honor of sending you, incomplete as it is, the letter that she had begun to you. This letter will prove to you that up to the last moment the regard that she professed to entertain for you remained the same.

"I am, sir, very sadly, as you may imagine, but very sincerely, Your humble friend,

"THERESE MIRAND."

Monsieur de Villenave's eyes followed my eyes as I read.

"At midnight," said he to me. "You see, it was at midnight that the portrait fell to the floor and was broken. Not only does the coincidence fit the day, but the minute."

"Yes," responded I, "that is so."

"You believe it, then?" exclaimed Monsieur de Villenave.

"To be sure I believe it."

"Oh! Well, then, come some day, my friend—some day when I shall be less troubled, let it be, and I'll tell you of something far stranger."

"Something that has happened to yourself?"

"No; but something of which I was the witness."

"When was that?"

"Oh, a long time ago. It was in 1774, when I was tutor to Monsieur de Chauvelin's children."

"And you will tell me about it?"

"Yes, I'll tell you the whole story. Meanwhile, you understand—"

"I understand you need to be alone."

I got up and prepared to take my departure.

"By the bye," said Monsieur de Villenave, "as you are passing, be so good as to say to those ladies that I shall not be down this evening; but they must not be uneasy about me."

I made a sign that his request should be attended to.

Then Monsieur de Villenave turned his arm-chair around so that he found himself facing the portrait; then, while I was closing the door, I heard him murmur:

"Poor Sophie!"

Now, the story that you are going to read was the one that was afterward related to me by Monsieur de Villenave.

IV.

THE KING'S DOCTOR.

On August 25th, 1774, Louis XV. spent the night at Versailles in the Blue Chamber. Near his couch, upon a folding-bed, slept the surgeon Lamartinière.

Five o'clock in the morning sounded from the clock in the court-yard, and there began to be movement in the palace.

A movement of uneasy shadows that watched over the slumbers of the prince at this hour, in which for some time past Louis XV., worn out by late hours and excesses, found a little repose purchased by the abuse of insomnia, and by narcotics when the abuse of insomnia did not suffice.

The king was no longer young—he was entering upon his sixty-fifth year. After having drunk his fill of pleasures, indulgences, and compliments, and drained them to the dregs until no such experience had for him the spice of novelty, he was weary of it all.

That fever of *ennui* was the worst of his ailments. Acute under Madame de Châteauroux, it had become intermittent

under Madame de Pompadour, and chronic under Madame du Barry.

For those who have nothing more to learn, there is sometimes left something to love—it is a sovereign resource against the disease by which Louis XV. was attacked. Satiated by the love which had been poured forth upon him by a whole people, and which had been carried to the extent of frenzy, that habit of the soul had appeared to him too vulgar to be indulged in by a king of France.

Louis XV., then, had been beloved by his people, his wife, and his mistresses; but Louis XV. himself had never loved anybody.

There remains, even to the *ennuyé*, one exciting preoccupation—that is, suffering. Aside from two or three sicknesses that he had passed through, Louis XV. had never suffered, and, favored mortal that he was, as a forewarning of old age was only experiencing a commencement of fatigue that the doctors represented to him as a signal for retreat.

Sometimes at those famous De Choisy suppers, where the tables came up through the floor all laden with viands, where pages from the little stables constituted the attendance, when the Countess du Barry enticed Louis XV. to quaff bumpers, the Duke d'Ayen to split his sides with laughter, and the Marquis de Chauvelin to epicurean gayety, Louis XV., with surprise, perceived that his hand was loath to lift that glass full of the sparkling liquor that he had loved so much, that his forehead refused to contract for that inextinguishable laughter which the sallies of Jeanne Vaubernier had once been wont to make blossom forth like autumn flowers on the frontiers of his ripe age; lastly, that his brain remained cold to the seducing descriptions of that very happy life which is procured by sovereign power, extreme wealth, and excellent health.

Louis XV.'s character was not open. He kept to himself both his joy and sadness. Perhaps, thanks to that inward absorption of his sentiments, he might have been a great politician if, as he said himself, time had not failed him.

As soon as he perceived the change that began to take place in him, instead of accepting his portion and philosophically inhaling those first breezes of old age that wrin-

kle the brow and silver the hair, he retired within himself and made his observations.

What makes the liveliest of men sad is the analysis of joy or suffering—analysis is a silence thrown in between peals of laughter or sobs.

Until now the king had only been seen to be uninterested; now he was sad. He laughed no longer at Madame du Barry's coarse jests, he smiled no longer at the Duke d'Ayen's mischief, and no longer responded to the friendly caresses of Monsieur de Chauvelin, his bosom friend, the Achates of his royal escapades.

Madame du Barry felt herself peculiarly aggrieved at this lowness of spirits, because toward her especially it degenerated into coldness.

This moral change made the doctors say that if the king was not sick he was certainly going to be so.

Also, on the preceding April 15th, Lamartinière, his first physician, after having made the king swallow his monthly medicine, ventured to make a few observations to him that he deemed urgent.

"Sire," Lamartinière had said to him, "as your majesty drinks no more, as your majesty eats no more, as your majesty is entertained no longer, what are you going to do?"

"Why, my dear Lamartinière," the king had replied, "whatever shall seem most amusing to me outside of all that."

"The thing is, I know of nothing new to offer your majesty for your diversion. Your majesty has made war, your majesty has tried to like learned men and artists, your majesty has loved women and champagne; now, when one has tasted glory, flattery, love, and wine, I protest to your majesty that I search in vain for a muscle, a substance, a nervous gland that reveals to me the existence of another qualification for some new diversion."

"Ah! ah!" ejaculated the king, "do you really think so, Lamartinière?"

"Sire, think well over it. Sardanapalus was a very intelligent king—almost as intelligent as your majesty, although he lived something like two thousand eight hundred years before you. He loved life, and busied himself a great deal about making a good use of it. I think I know that he sought minutely for the means of exercising body

and mind in the discovery of the least-known pleasures. Well, never have historians taught me that he found out anything with which you are unacquainted."

"Is that so, Lamartinière?"

"I except champagne wine, sire, of which Sardanapalus knew nothing. On the contrary, he had for drinking the thick, heavy, and muddy wines of Asia Minor, those liquid flames that filter from the pulp of archipelago grapes, wines that excite to fury the person intoxicated by them, while drunkenness caused by champagne is only a folly."

"That is true, my dear Lamartinière, that is true; champagne is a pretty wine, and I have greatly loved it. But tell me, did he not end by burning himself upon a funeral pyre—this Sardanapalus of yours?"

"Yes, sire; it was the only kind of pleasure that he had not yet tried; he reserved it for the last."

"And undoubtedly it was to render this pleasure as lively as possible that he set fire to himself, his palace, his riches, and his favorite?"

"Yes, sire."

"Do I understand that you would advise me, perchance, my dear Lamartinière, to burn Versailles and myself with Madame du Barry?"

"No, sire. You have made war, you have seen conflagrations, you were enveloped yourself in the cannonade of Fontenoy. A fire would consequently be no new amusement to you. Come; let us recapitulate your means of defense against *ennui*."

"Oh, Lamartinière, I am completely disarmed."

"In the first place, you have Monsieur de Chauvelin, your friend—a man of wit—a—"

"Chauvelin is no longer witty, my dear."

"Since when?"

"Why, since I have grown tired of him, of course."

"Pshaw!" said Lamartinière, "it is as if you should say that Madame du Barry is no longer beautiful since—"

"Since what?" asked the king, reddening a little.

"Oh, I know what I mean," replied the physician, bluntly.

"The long and short of it is," said the king, with a sigh, "it is decided that I am going to be sick?"

"I fear so, sire."

"A remedy, then, Lamartinière, a remedy; let us prevent the evil."

"Rest, sire. I know of no other."

"Well?"

"Diet."

"Well?"

"Diversions."

"There I stop you, Lamartinière."

"How is that?"

"Yes, you prescribe diversions for me and do not say of what they are to consist. Well, I esteem you ignorant, most ignorant! Do you hear, my friend?"

"And you are wrong, sire. It is your fault and not mine."

"How so?"

"One does not divert those who take no pleasure in anything, having Monsieur de Chauvelin for a friend and Madame du Barry for a mistress."

There was a silence, by which the king seemed to admit that what Lamartinière had just said was not without foundation of right.

Then the king resumed:

"Well, Lamartinière, my friend, since we are on the subject of sickness, at least let us reason together. You say that I have partaken of every pleasure in the world, do you not?"

"I do say it, and it is so."

"Of war?"

"Of course, when one has won the battle of Fontenoy."

"Yes, that was a diverting spectacle—men in rags, four miles long and a mile wide, steeped in blood; a scent of butchery uplifting to the heart."

"Glory, in short."

"Besides, is it I that won the battle? Wasn't it Marshal Saxe? Wasn't it the Duke de Richelieu? Above all, wasn't it Pecquigny with his four pieces of artillery?"

"Never mind; who got the credit of the triumph? Why, you!"

"I like it so. That, then, is the reason that you think I ought to love glory? Ah! my dear Lamartinière," added the king, uttering a sigh, "if you knew what wretched accommodations I had on the eve of Fontenoy!"

"Ah, well! be it so; let us pass over glory. Not want-

ing to acquire it for yourself, you can have it given to you by painters, poets, and historians."

"Lamartinière, I have a horror of all those people, who are either snobs of a lower type than my lackeys, or so swollen with pride as to be entirely too high and mighty to pass beneath my grandfather's arch of triumph. That Voltaire above everything. Why, one day the fellow actually slapped me on the shoulder, calling me Trajan. They tell him that he is king of my realm, and the blockhead believes it. So I'll none of that immortality which those people might give me—one would have to pay too high for it in this perishable world, and perhaps even in the next."

"In that case, what do you want, sir—say?"

"I want to make my life last as long as I possibly can. I want to have enter into this life just as much as possible of the things that I love; and to that end I shall address myself neither to the poets, philosophers, nor warriors. No, Lamartinière, after God, you see, decidedly I esteem only doctors—when they are good, be it understood."

"You don't say so."

"Speak to me frankly, then, my dear Lamartinière."

"Yes, sire."

"What have I to fear?"

"Apoplexy."

"Does one die of it?"

"Yes, if one is not bled in time."

"Lamartinière, you shall not leave me any more."

"That is impossible, sire. I have my patients, I have—"

"Very well; but it seems to me that my health—the health of the king—is as interesting to France and to Europe as that of all your patients put together. Your bed shall be made up every night near to my own."

"Sire!"

"What matters it to you whether you lie here or elsewhere? And your very presence will be reassuring to me, my dear Lamartinière, and you will scare away sickness—for sickness knows you, and knows that she has no more determined enemy than you."

And that is why the physician Lamartinière found himself, on April 5th, 1774, lying on a cot in the Blue Chamber at Versailles, sleeping profoundly toward five o'clock in the morning, while the king, for his part, was not asleep.

Louis XV., who was not sleeping, as we have just stated, uttered a deep sigh; but considering that a sigh has no positive significance but what the person sighing gives it, Lamartinière, who was snoring instead of sighing, heard it between his snores, but paid no heed to it, or, rather, appeared to pay no attention to it.

The king, seeing that his physician-in-ordinary was insensible to that appeal, leaned over the side of his bed, and by the light of the great wax taper that was burning in the marble mortar he contemplated his watcher, whom a thick and soft coverlet reaching up to the top-knot of his night-cap hid from the most pertinacious gaze.

"Oh, me! oh, me!" sighed the king.

Again Lamartinière heard; but as an interjection may sometimes escape a man asleep, it is not reason sufficient for awakening another one.

The physician then went on snoring.

"He is happy to be able to sleep so," murmured Louis XV. Then he added: "How corporeal these doctors are!"

And he took it upon him to wait longer; but having waited for a whole quarter of an hour in vain, he finally said:

"Halloo, Lamartinière!"

"Well, what will you have, sire?" asked his majesty's doctor, groaning.

"At, my poor Lamartinière!" repeated the king, moaning as pitiably as he could.

"Well! What?"

And the doctor, grumbling all the while like a man who is sure that he may presume upon his position, finally was induced to slide out of his bed.

He found the king seated upon his.

"Well, sire, are you suffering?" asked he of him.

"I believe I am, my dear Lamartinière," replied his majesty.

"Oh! oh! you are a little agitated."

"I should say so—very much agitated, yes."

"About what?"

"I don't know."

"I know—I do," murmured the physician. "It is fear."

"Feel my pulse, Lamartinière."

"That is what I am doing."

"Ah, well?"

"Ah, well, sire, it marks eight-eight pulsations to the minute, which is a great deal with old men."

"With old men, Lamartinière?"

"To be sure."

"I am only sixty-four years old, and at sixty-four one is not old as yet."

"At that age one is no longer young."

"Come; what do you prescribe?"

"First, how do you feel?"

"I am smothering, it seems to me."

"No; on the contrary, you are cold."

"I must be red, mustn't I?"

"Come, then, you are pale. A word of advice, sire."

"What is it?"

"Try to go to sleep again. That would be very nice."

"I am no longer sleepy."

"Let us see. What does that agitation signify?"

"Confound it! It seems to me that you ought to know, Lamartinière, or it would not be worth while to be a doctor."

"Could you have had a bad dream?"

"Well, yes."

"A dream!" exclaimed Lamartinière, raising his hands to heaven—"a dream!"

"Confound it!" resumed the king, "there are dreams."

"Well, let's see. Tell it—your dream, sire."

"It is not to be told, friend."

"Why so? Everything is to be told."

"To the confessor—yes."

"Then send me for your confessor as speedily as possible. Meanwhile, I am taking my lancet away."

"A dream is sometimes a secret."

"Yes, and sometimes it imports remorse as well. You are right, sire. Adieu!"

And the doctor began to draw on his socks and pantaloons.

"Let us see, Lamartinière, let us see. Don't be vexed, my friend. Well, I dreamed—I dreamed that they were carrying me to St. Denis."

"And that the carriage was bad? Pshaw! When you shall make that journey you will not perceive anything of the sort, sire."

"How can you jest about such things?" said the king, shuddering. "No; I dreamed that they were bearing me to St. Denis, and that I was alive, buried in the velvet of my casket."

"Did you feel confined in that casket?"

"Yes, somewhat so."

"Vapors, black humors, bad digestion."

"Oh! I did not eat any supper last night."

"Empty, then?"

"Do you think so?"

"Ah! now I think of it, at what hour did you leave Madame the Countess yesterday?"

"I have not seen her for two days."

"You sulk in her company—ill-humor, you must admit yourself."

"Oh, no; it is she who is in the sulks. I have not given her something that I had promised her."

"Give her that something quickly, and your spirits will revive at once."

"No; I am steeped in sadness."

"Ah! an idea!"

"What is it?"

"Breakfast with Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"Breakfast!" exclaimed the king. "That was fine in the days when I had an appetite."

"Ah! there it is!" cried the physician, crossing his arms; "you no longer have any use for your friends, nor for your mistress, nor even for your breakfast, and you think that I am going to suffer that? Very well, sire. I declare one thing to you, I do, and that is, that if you change your habits you are lost."

"Lamartinière! My friends make me yawn, my mistress puts me to sleep, and my breakfast chokes me."

"Well, most positively, then, you are sick."

"Ah, Lamartinière!" exclaimed the king, "I have been happy a very long time."

"And do you complain of that? That is like men."

"No, I certainly do not complain of the past, but the present; by dint of rolling, the chariot is worn out."

And the king uttered a sigh.

"That is true, it wears out," repeated the physician, sententiously.

"So that the springs go no longer," sighed the king, "and I aspire to rest."

"Very well, go to sleep, then!" exclaimed Lamartinière, covering himself up in bed again.

"Let me go on with my metaphor, my good doctor."

"Could I have deceived myself, and you become a poet, sire? Another dreadful malady, that."

"No; on the contrary, you know that I detest them—poets, I mean. To please Madame de Pompadour, I had that croaking Voltaire made a nobleman; but from the day that he went so far as to be familiar, calling me Titus or Trajan—I do not know which now—I was done with him. What I wanted to say without poetizing is, that I do believe it is time for me to apply the brakes."

"Do you wish to have my opinion, sire?"

"Yes, my friend."

"Well, do not apply the brakes, sir, but unharness."

"That is hard," murmured Louis XV.

"That is so, sire. When I speak to the king, I address him as your majesty; when I turn to my patient, I do not even say sir to him. So, then, sire, get out of the traces, and that quickly. And now that the thing is settled, we have still an hour and a half for sleeping, sire; so let us go to sleep."

And the physician again drew his covering about him, wrapped in which, five minutes afterward he was snoring in so vulgar a manner that the arches of the Blue Chamber frowned with indignation.

V.

THE KING'S LEVEE.

THE king, abandoned to himself, did not attempt to interrupt the obstinate doctor, whose sleep, regulated like a clock, lasted as long as he had said that it would.

Half past six had struck. As the *valet de chambre* was now to enter, Lamartinière got up and passed into an adjoining closet while his bed was being taken away.

There he wrote a prescription for the doctors who were now to be on duty, and disappeared.

The king gave orders that his attendants should first come in, afterward the noblemen calling.

He bowed silently, then held out his legs to the *valets de chambre,* who drew on his hose, clasped his garters, and dressed him in his morning-gown.

Then he fell on his knees before his praying-desk, sighing several times in the midst of the general silence.

Each one had knelt just as the king had done, and like him prayed with many distractions.

The king from time to time turned toward the balustrade, whence ordinarily pressed for admittance the most familiar and favored of his courtiers.

"For whom is the king looking?" asked the Duke de Richelieu and the Duke d'Ayen in a whisper.

"It is not us, for he would find us," said the Duke d'Ayen; "but stop, the king rises!"

Indeed, Louis XV. had finished his devotions, or, rather, had been so distracted that he could not recite his prayers.

"I do not see the master of the wardrobe," said Louis XV., looking around him.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin?" asked the Duke de Richelieu.

"Yes."

"But, sire, he is here."

"Where then?"

"There," said the duke, turning around. Then suddenly, utterly surprised: "Ah! ah!" said he.

"What then?" asked the king.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin is still at prayer."

In fact, the Marquis de Chauvelin, that agreeable pagan, that merry companion in small sacrileges perpetrated by royalty, that spiritual foe of the gods in general and the Christian's God in particular, the marquis had remained on his knees, not only contrary to his own habit, but, moreover, contrary to etiquette, seeing that the king had finished his praying.

"Why, marquis," asked the king, smiling, "are you asleep?"

The marquis arose slowly, made the sign of the cross, and bowed before Louis XV. with profound reverence.

Every one was accustomed to laugh when Monsieur de Chauvelin gave the cue; it was believed that he was jesting, and they laughed from habit, the king as well as the others.

But almost immediately recovering his seriousness:

"Come, come, marquis," said Louis XV., "you know

that I do not like sporting with sacred things. However, as you want to brighten me up a little, I presume, you are pardoned for the sake of the intention. I only forewarn you that you have a great deal to do," added he with a sigh, "for I am melancholy as death itself."

"You melancholy, sire?" asked the Duke d'Ayen; "and what is it, pray, that can sadden your majesty?"

"My health, duke, my health, which is giving way. I have Lamartinière to come and sleep in my room; but that outrageous fellow, on the contrary, sets himself to frightening me. Happily here they seem disposed to laugh. Isn't that so, Chauvelin?"

But the challenges of the king met with no response. The Marquis de Chauvelin himself, whose refined and sensitive features so willingly reflected his master's jollity; the marquis, so consummate a courtier that he had never been behind-hand in gratifying a wish of the king; the marquis, this time, instead of responding to the need expressed by Louis XV. for some distraction, though a slight one, remained severely sad and altogether absorbed in an inexplicable gravity.

Some persons, so contrary was this sadness to Monsieur de Chauvelin's habits—some persons, we say, thought that the marquis was carrying on the joke, and that this gravity would end in a resplendent burst of hilarity; but the king that morning had not the patience to wait, and began to combat vigorously his favorite's low spirits.

"But what the devil is the matter with you, Chauvelin?" asked Louis XV.; "are you going to continue my last night's dream? Do you want to be taken out for burial too?"

"Oh! Could your majesty have possibly dreamed of such horrible things?".asked Richelieu.

"Yes; a nightmare, duke. But, to tell the truth, what I stand in my sleep I would rather not have to encounter again in my waking hours. Well, come, Chauvelin; what is the matter with you?"

The marquis bowed without replying.

"Speak, man! I tell you, speak!" exclaimed the king.

"Sire," replied the marquis, "I am thinking."

"Of what?" asked Louis XV., astonished.

"Of God, sire."

"Of God?"

"Yes, sire, God—that is the beginning of wisdom."

This cold and monosyllabic preamble made the king shudder, and fixing upon the marquis a more attentive look, he discovered in his worn and pinched features the probable cause of this unaccustomed sadness.

"The beginning of wisdom?" said he. "I am no longer astonished if that beginning has never had any sequence; it is too tiresome. But you were not thinking only of God. Of what else were you thinking?"

"Of my wife and children, whom I have not seen for a long while, sire."

"Hold! That is true, Chauvelin. You are married and have children, but I had forgotten it; and so must you, it seems to me, for during the fifteen years that we have seen each other every day, this is the first time that I have ever heard you mention them. Well, if you are seized with a rage for family life, let them come; I'll make no objection; your apartments in the palace are quite spacious enough, it seems to me."

"Sire," answered the marquis, "Madame de Chauvelin leads a strictly secluded life, engrossed with her devotions, and—"

"And she would be scandalized, would she not, at the goings-on at Versailles? I understand. It is like my daughter Louise, whom I can not tear away from St. Denis. Then I see no remedy for it, my dear marquis."

"I beg the king's pardon, there is one."

"What one?"

"My quarter will end this evening. If the king would allow me to go to Grosbois and pass some days with my family—"

"You jest, marquis. Quit me?"

"I shall return, sire; but I should not like to die without having made a few testamentary dispositions."

"To die! Plague take the man! To die! How he tells you that! How old, then, are you, marquis?"

"Sire, ten years younger than your majesty, although I appear to be ten years older."

The king turned his back upon that humorist, and addressing himself to the Duke de Coigny, whose seat was very near his daïs:

"Ah! there you are, duke; you have come up just at the right time. They were talking about you at supper

the other evening. Is it true that you exercised hospitality toward that poor Gentil Bernard in my Château de Choisy? It would be a good action for which I should praise you. However, if all my castellans should do the same, and entertain all the poets turned madmen, there would be left me no other resource than to repair to Bedlam myself. How is that unfortunate getting along?"

"Badly enough still, sire."

"And how did derangement come to him?"

"Sire, by giving himself up to pleasure too much in the long ago, and, above all, by trying to play the young man quite recently."

"Yes, yes; I understand. It was to be expected. He is very old."

"I beg the king's pardon, sire, but he is only one year older than your majesty."

"Indeed! this is insupportable," said the king, turning his back on the Duke de Coigny; "not only are they as gloomy to-day as the tombs, but they are, besides, as silly as geese."

The Duke d'Ayen, one of the wittiest men of that witty age, perceived the increasing ill-humor of the king, and dreading its culmination, determined to put a stop to this sort of thing as soon as possible. He took two steps forward, so as to draw attention to himself. He wore upon his vest, his garters, and around his coat gold lace which was deep and glittering, and could not fail to attract notice. The monarch, indeed, saw him.

"By my faith, Duke d'Ayen," he exclaimed, "you are as radiant as the sun. Have you then stolen a coach? I supposed all the embroiderers of Paris were ruined since the marriage of the Count de Provence, when no courtier paid them, and to which the princes did not think fit to come, for want of money or credit, no doubt."

"They are ruined, to be sure, sire."

"Who—the princes, embroiderers, or courtiers?"

"All somewhat so, I am afraid; yet the embroiderers are the cleverest; they are going to draw out of it."

"How?"

"By this new invention here," and he pointed at his trimmings.

"I do not understand."

"Yes, sire, these coats embroidered this way are styled *à la chancelière.*"

"I understand still less."

"There might be one good way of making his majesty comprehend that enigma; it would be by reciting those lines that some idle Parisians have made, but I dare not."

"You dare not, duke, you?" said the king, smiling.

"By my faith, no, sire; I await the king's command."

"I give it you."

"The king will at least remember that I do naught but obey. Here are the lines, then:

"'They make certain braid of material new,
They serve, though, for gala days only, you see.
A la chancelière is the name that they bear;
Why so? 'Tis that false and unblushing they be.'"

The courtiers looked at one another, amazed at so much audacity, and at the same time all turned toward Louis XV. in order to model their countenances after his. The Chancellor Maupeou, then in high favor, supported by the favorite, was too lofty a personage for one to dare to give heed to the epigrams that were incessantly coming out against him. The monarch smiled; immediately afterward all lips relaxed into a smile. He made no reply, and nobody said a word.

Louis XV. had a singular disposition. He feared death horribly, and did not wish any one to allude to his own. But whenever opportunity allowed, he took peculiar pleasure in ridiculing the weakness that nearly all people have of concealing their age or their infirmities. He said to a courtier, without provocation:

"You are old, you look badly, you will die very soon."

He mingled some philosophy with this, and this same day, after having twice received cruel attacks, he exposed himself to receive a third.

In order to resume the conversation broken off with the Duke d'Ayen, he said to him quite bluntly:

"How is the Chevalier de Noailles? Is it true that he is sick?"

"Sire, we had the misfortune of losing him yesterday."

"Ah! I had told him that it would be so."

Then facing the circle of courtiers, augmented by fresh arrivals, he perceived the Abbé de Broglio, a man crusty and plain-spoken. He apostrophized him in these terms:

"It will be your turn next, abbé. You were just two days younger than he."

"Sire," replied Monsieur de Broglio, all white with passion, "your majesty went hunting yesterday. A storm came up. The king got wet like the rest of us."

And yielding his place, he went out furious.

The king watched him retire with a look mournful enough, and added:

"See how that Abbé de Broglio is; he is always angry."

Then perceiving at the door his physician Bonnard, and with him Bordeu, a *protégé* of Madame du Barry, and aspiring to replace him, he called both of them:

"Come, gentlemen, they do not speak of death here this morning; that is your affair. Which of you will find the fountain of youth? It would be a world's wonder, and I'll guarantee his fortune made Why not you, Bordeu? You, Æsculapius near Venus, I understand, you have not thought of these repairs yet."

"I beg the king's pardon; on the contrary, I have thought out a system which is to restore to us that good time of history."

"Of fable," interrupted Bonnard.

"You believe so," pursued the king, "you believe so, my poor Bonnard? The fact is, that under your direction my youth is no longer anything but a very bitter recollection; and he who would rejuvenate me now would at once be historiographer of France, for he would have traced out the fairest pages of my reign. Do that, Bordeu, and you will effect a cure worthy of a great celebrity. Meanwhile, feel the pulse of Monsieur de Chauvelin; only see how pale and miserable he looks! Give me your advice as to that health, very precious to our pleasures—and to my heart," added he, very quickly."

Chauvelin smiled bitterly as he presented his arm to the doctor.

"To which of you two?" asked he.

"Both," replied Louis XV., laughing; "but not to Lamartinière—he is the sort of man to predict a fit of apoplexy for you, as he did for me."

"Be it so, then; I'll consult you, Monsieur Bonnard—the past before the future. What is your advice?"

"The marquis is very sick. There is a fullness, an en-

largement of the fibers of the brain. He would do well to have himself bled, and that very promptly."

"And you, Monsieur Bordeu?"

"I must beg pardon for differing from my learned colleague; but I can not be of the same opinion as his experience. The marquis's pulse betrays nervousness. If I were speaking to a pretty woman, I should say that he had the vapors. He needs cheerfulness, repose, no worries, no business, complete satisfaction—in short, all that he finds in the presence of the august monarch, who does him the honor to call him friend. I prescribe the continuation of the same *régime.*"

"Well, we have two admirable consultations, and may Monsieur de Chauvelin be enlightened after that. My poor marquis, if you chance to die, Bordeu is a dishonored man."

"No, sire; vapors kill when they are not attended to."

"Sire, if I do die, I pray God that it may be at your feet."

"Do no such thing; you would give me a horrible fright. But is it not time for mass? It seems to me that I see there the Bishop de Senez and the curate of our parish, St. Louis. They are going to give me a little contentment this time. Good-day, curate; how comes on your flock? Are there many sick and poor?"

"Alas! sire, a good many."

"But are not alms abundant? Has the price of bread been raised? Has the number of poor wretches increased?"

"Oh, yes, sire."

"How does that happen? Where do they come from?"

"Sire, applications for charity come even from footmen in your palace."

"I believe it—they are not paid. Do you hear, Monsieur de Richelieu? And can not this matter be set to rights? What the devil! You are First Gentleman of the Bed-chamber this year."

"Sire, the footmen are not in my department; they belong to the province of general stewardship."

"And the stewardship will send them to somebody else. Poor people!" said the king, with momentary feeling; "but I can not do everything. Follow us to mass. Bishop, follow us to mass," added he, turning to the Abbé

de Beauvais, Bishop of Senez, who was preaching at court during Lent.

"I am at your majesty's service," replied the bishop, bowing; "but I have heard solemn words here. They speak of death, and yet nobody thinks of it; nobody thinks that it is coming at its appointed hour, when one is not expecting it; that it surprises us in the midst of pleasures, that it strikes high and low with its inexorable scythe. Nobody reflects that there is coming a time when repentance and penitence are as much a necessity as a duty, when the fires of concupiscence must be extinguished before the great thought of salvation."

"Richelieu," interrupted the king, smiling, "it seems to me that the bishop casts many stones into your garden."

"Yes, sire; and he casts them with such force that they rebound even into the park of Versailles."

"Ah! well answered, duke. You are as good at repartee to-day as you were twenty years ago. Bishop, this discourse commences well; we will take it up again Sunday in the chapel. I promise you to give it a hearing. Chauvelin, we will dispense with your attendance; you need recreation. Go and wait for me at the countess's," added he in an undertone. "She has received her famous golden mirror—Rotiers' *chef-d'œuvre.* You must see that."

"Sire, I prefer to repair to Grosbois."

"Still! You are a silly dear. Go and see the countess; she will exorcise the witches. Gentlemen, to mass! to mass! This is a day that has had a poor beginning. What a thing it is to grow old!"

VI.

MADAME DU BARRY'S MIRROR.

THE marquis, out of obedience to the king, and in spite of the repugnance he felt to obedience, repaired to the abode of the favorite.

The favorite was wild with joy; she was dancing around like a child, and no sooner was Monsieur de Chauvelin announced than she ran to him, and, without giving him time to say a single word:

"Oh, my dear marquis, my dear marquis!" exclaimed

she, "you come in the very nick of time! To-day I am the happiest person in the world! I have had the most charming awakening that any one could have. In the first place, Rotiers has sent me my mirror; it is that you are come to see, no doubt; but we must wait for the king. And then, as several good things always come together, the famous carriage has come, you know—the carriage that Monsieur d'Aiguillon gives me."

"Ah! yes," said the marquis, "the *vis-à-vis* of which they are talking everywhere. That was richly owing to you, madame."

"Oh! I know that people are talking about it. Good gracious! I even know what they say about it."

"Truly, you know all."

"Yes, nearly. You understand, though, I laugh at it. Stop! here are some verses that I found this morning in the very pockets of the *vis-à-vis*. I could have the poor saddler arrested; but pshaw! those things did for Madame de Pompadour. I am too well satisfied to be revengeful, I am. Besides, the lines are not bad, it strikes me; and if I was always treated thus, upon my word of honor I would not complain."

And she presented the lines to Monsieur de Chauvelin.

Monsieur de Chauvelin took them and read:

"'For what that grand and gay turn-out?
Is it the chariot of a goddess,
Or of some charming princess?'
Exclaimed an idler in amaze.
'No, no,' replied a caustic wit.
'The truth, my friend, you have not hit.
'Tis the chariot of the washer woman,
Of that infamous D'Aiguillon.'"

And the giddy courtesan burst into loud peals of laughter. Then she resumed:

"'Of that infamous D'Aiguillon,' you hear; *his washer-woman*. Bless me! the author is right, and that is not saying too much. Without me, indeed, the poor duke, in spite of the powder with which he was covered at the battle of—I never know the names of battles—without me the poor duke would have remained under a dark, dark shadow. But, pshaw! What matters it, as said my predecessor, Monsieur de Mazarin, 'they sing; they shall pay for it,' and a single one of the panels in my *vis-à-vis* is

worth more than all the epigrams that they have made against me during the whole four years. I am going to show it to you. Come, marquis, follow me."

And the countess, forgetting that she was no longer Jeanne Vaubernier, and forgetting the age of the marquis, went singing down the steps of a private staircase leading to a small court-yard where were kept her equipages.

"See," said she to the marquis, who was all out of breath, "is it presentable enough for a washer-woman's carriage?"

The marquis stood there stupefied. Never had his eyes beheld anything more magnificent and at the same time elegant. Upon the four principal panels were seen the Du Barry arms, with the famous battle-cry, "Push forward." Upon each of the side panels was seen repeated a basket adorned with a bed of roses, upon which two doves were tenderly billing; the whole polished with Martin gilding, the secret for which is now lost.

This carriage cost fifty-six thousand livres.

"Has the king seen this superb present, countess?" asked the Marquis de Chauvelin.

"Not yet; but I am sure of one thing."

"Of what thing are you sure? Let us see."

"That he will be charmed with it."

"Whew! whew!"

"How—whew! whew?"

"Yes, I doubt it."

"You doubt it?"

"I even bet that he will not permit you to accept it."

"And why?"

"Because you could not use it."

"Well, really!" returned she, ironically. "Ah! you make a fuss over so little."

"Yes."

"You'll see something very different, though; and the gold mirror, then, and this," added she, drawing a paper from her pocket; "but as for this, you shall not see it."

"As you like, madame," replied the marquis, bowing.

"And yet, after that monkey, De Richelieu, you are the oldest friend of the king; you know him well; he listens to you; you could help me if you would; and then— Let us go up into my cabinet again, marquis."

"It is for you to command, madame."

"You are in a very ill-humor to-day. What is the matter with you?"

"I am sad, madame."

"Ah! So much the worse. That is folly."

And Madame du Barry, acting as guide to the marquis, began to climb, with a more sedate step, the private staircase that awhile ago she had come down so lightly and singing like a bird.

She returned to her cabinet, Monsieur de Chauvelin following her closely; then she closed its door, and turning with animation to the marquis, she said to him:

"Come, now, do you love me, Chauvelin?"

"You can not doubt my respect and devotion, madame."

"Would you serve me in opposition to all?"

"Except the king, madame."

"In any case, if you do not approve of what you are going to learn, you will remain neutral?"

"I promise this if you exact it."

"Your word."

"Upon the faith of a Chauvelin."

"Read, then."

And the countess handed over to him the strangest, boldest, most absurd document that a gentleman's eyes ever rested upon. At first the marquis did not comprehend the whole bearing of it.

It was a petition addressed to the pope for the breaking off of her marriage with the Count du Barry, under pretext of having been his brother's mistress, and the canons forbidding such alliances, that marriage was necessarily null; she added, that, forewarned—immediately after the nuptial benediction had been pronounced—of the sacrilege that she was going to commit, of which she had no suspicion until then, she had been seized with fear, and the marriage had not been consummated.

The marquis read this supplication over twice, and returning it to the favorite, asked her what she expected to do with it.

"Why, send it away, apparently," replied she, with her ordinary effrontery.

"To whom?"

"To its address."

"To the pope?"

"To the pope."

"After that?"

"Do you not guess?"

"No."

"Good gracious! but your head is dull to-day."

"That is possible; but the fact is that I can not imagine."

"You have believed, then, that I aimlessly favored Madame de Montesson? You have forgotten, then, the great dauphin and Mademoiselle Choin? Louis XV. and Madame de Maintenon? They are crying out to the king all day long that he must imitate his illustrious grandfather. They will have nothing to say then. I am as good as the Widow Scarron, it seems to me; and if ages are compared, I have the advantage."

"Oh, madame! madame! what have I just heard?" said Monsieur de Chauvelin, turning pale and taking one step backward.

At that moment the door opened, and Zamore announced:

"The king."

"The king!" exclaimed Madame du Barry, seizing the hand of Monsieur de Chauvelin. "The king! Not a word. We will resume this subject another time."

The king entered.

His looks were directed to Madame du Barry, in the first place, and yet it was to the marquis that he addressed his first remark.

"Ah! Chauvelin! Chauvelin!" exclaimed the king, struck by the alteration of the marquis's features, "can it be that you are going to die for good? I declare, my friend, you have the look of a specter."

"To die! Monsieur de Chauvelin die!" exclaimed the silly young woman, laughing. "Ah! well, yes, I prohibit him from doing any such thing. You forget, sire, what the horoscope foretold about him five years ago at the fair of the St. Germain lodges."

"What horoscope?" asked the king.

"Must I repeat it?"

"Undoubtedly."

"You do not believe in fortune-telling, I hope, sire."

"No; but though I should believe in it, tell it all the same."

"Ah, well! They predicted to Monsieur de Chauvelin that he would die two months before your majesty."

"And what fool predicted that to him?" asked the king, with a certain uneasiness.

"Why, a very skillful sorcerer—the same who predicted for me—"

"Foolishness, all of it!" interrupted the king, with a very marked movement of impatience. "Let us see the mirror."

"Then, sire, we shall have to pass into the chamber to that side."

"Let us proceed thither."

"Show us the way, sire. You know it; it is the bed-chamber of your very humble servant."

The king did indeed know the way, and went first.

The mirror was placed upon the dressing-table, covered with a thick veil that fell at a word from the king, and they could admire a *chef-d'œuvre* worthy of Benvenuto Cellini. That mirror, the frame of which was in massive gold, was surmounted by two cupids in full relief supporting a crown royal, beneath which was naturally placed the head of the person who contemplated herself in the glass.

"Ah! but it is superb!" cried the king. "Rotiers has indeed surpassed himself! I shall compliment him upon his effort. Countess, it is I who give you this, be it well understood."

"You give me everything?"

"To be sure I give you everything."

"Mirror and frame?"

"Mirror and frame."

"Even that?" added the countess, with a seducing smile that made the marquis shudder, above all after what he had just read.

The countess pointed to the royal crown.

"That toy?" answered the king.

The countess gave a little nod with her head.

"Oh! you can amuse yourself with it as much as you please, countess; but I warn you that it is heavy. Ah! but there's one thing, Chauvelin; you will not cheer up even in the presence of madame, and in presence of her mirror, which is a double favor that she grants you, since you see her twice."

The royal madrigal was rewarded by a kiss from the countess.

The marquis did not unbend.

"What do you think of that mirror, marquis? Give us your opinion. Come!"

"Why should I do so, sire?" asked the marquis.

"Why, because you are a man of good taste, to be sure."

"I should have preferred not to see it."

"Well, and why, pray?"

"Because at least I should have been able to deny its existence."

"What means that?"

"Sire, the royal crown is ill placed in the hands of loves," replied the marquis, bowing profoundly.

Madame du Barry crimsoned with rage.

The king, in embarrassment, pretended not to understand.

"On the contrary, how charming are those loves," resumed Louis XV.; "they hold that crown with unparalleled grace. See their little arms, how beautifully they are curved; would not one say that they were carrying a garland of flowers?"

"That is their proper employment, sire; loves are good only for that."

"Loves are good for everything, Monsieur de Chauvelin," said the countess. "You did not doubt it formerly; but at your age one no longer recalls those things."

"To be sure; and it is young men of my sort that it becomes to remember them," said the king, laughing. "However that may be, the mirror, then, does not please you?"

"It is not the mirror, sire."

"What else, then? Could it be the charming visage that it reflects? The devil! You are hard to please, marquis?"

"On the contrary, nobody renders more sincere homage to madame's beauty."

"But," demanded Madame du Barry, impatiently, "if it is neither the mirror nor the face reflected in it, what is it, then—say?"

"It is the place that it occupies."

"On the contrary, does it not marvelously well become that toilet-table, likewise a gift to me from his majesty?"

"It would be better elsewhere."

"But where, pray? For verily you anger me with that air of yours, which you never wore before."

"In the room of the dauphiness, madame!"

"How!"

"Yes, the crown of *fleurs-de-lys* can only be for her who has been, who is, or who will be Queen of France."

Madame du Barry's eyes flashed lightning.

The king made a terrible mouth.

Then he arose, saying:

"You are right, Marquis de Chauvelin; your mind is in an unhealthy condition. Go and take some rest at Grosbois, since you are so dissatisfied with us. Go, marquis, go!"

Monsieur de Chauvelin made a profound bow for his sole reply, left the cabinet, walking backward, as if he had been in the grand apartments of Versailles, and strictly observing the etiquette which prohibits the salutation of any other person in presence of the king, he disappeared without even having glanced at the countess.

The countess bit her nails in her fury; the king endeavored to pacify her.

"That poor Chauvelin," said he, "must have had such a dream as I had. Indeed, all these strong minded-people succumb to the first stroke when the black angel touches them with his wing. Chauvelin is ten years younger than I am, and still I have the vanity to believe that I hold my own better than he does."

"Oh, yes, sire, you hold your own better than anybody in the world. You are wiser than your councilors and younger than your children."

The king beamed at this last compliment, which he tried to merit, contrary to the advice of Lamartinière.

VII.

THE MONK, THE TUTOR, THE STEWARD.

THE day after the day when the king had allowed Monsieur de Chauvelin to withdraw to his estates, the marchioness, wife of the latter, was walking in the Grosbois park with her children and their tutor.

A holy and noble woman, forgotten under the shade of

these great oaks by the corruption that had been preying upon France for the last fifty years, Madame de Chauvelin had still for her consolation the God who blessed her, her children who loved her, and her vassals who reverenced her.

She returned to God only her prayers, to her children their love, to her neighbor charity.

Always occupied with what her husband was doing, she followed him in thought to the stormy theater of court life, as the sailor's wife follows with her heart the poor voyager on the deep, lost in fogs and storm.

The marquis had loved his wife tenderly. Become a courtier and a preferred one, he had never thrown his last stake in that game which kings always win from their favorites; the happiness of domestic life was the pure and ideal flame upon which he smiled from afar.

That voyager of whom we spoke awhile ago regarded that love of family as the shipwrecked man regards the light-house. He hoped after the squall of wind was over to warm himself at the ever-blazing, joyous fire of his own hearth-stone.

Monsieur de Chauvelin deserves credit for never having forced the marchioness to come and reside at Versailles.

The pious woman would have obeyed, and sacrificed herself.

But the marquis had never spoken of such a thing but once.

Upon seeing the regret pictured in his wife's eyes at the first mention of such a move, he gave it up. It was not as evil-disposed persons went away saying, that Monsieur de Chauvelin dreaded his wife's lectures; any debauchee, any courtier groveling before the concubine or the monarch, finds courage enough to rule his wife and discipline his children.

No, Monsieur de Chauvelin had abandoned his wife to her holy meditations.

"I am earning enough acres of territory in hell," said he; "let us allow my good wife to earn a few inches of azure for me in heaven."

He was seen no more at Grosbois; his wife prepared a feast for him every year on his birthday, when he would arrive at St. Andrew.

It was an invariable rule. Monsieur de Chauvelin would

greet his children at two o'clock, would dine in their company, get into his carriage at six o'clock, and was in attendance upon the king when he went to rest.

For four years this routine had been followed out. In four years he had four times pressed his lips upon the marchioness's hand. On New Year's Day his sons would go to see him at Versailles with their tutor.

Monsieur de Chauvelin intrusted his wife with the care of bringing up his children. The Abbé V——, a young scholar who had not yet received orders, but who, notwithstanding, was titled abbé through courtesy, zealously seconded the marchioness's efforts, and gave all his time and affections to these young children abandoned by their father.

Life was pleasant at Grosbois. The marchioness divided her time between the administration of her affairs, confided to an old steward named Bonbonne, between the exercises of an austere piety, the aspirations of which were directed by a Camaldule monk of fine character and ability —that is, Father Delar—and the education of the two children, who promised to bear worthily a name made illustrious by great services rendered the state.

Sometimes a letter, escaped from the marquis in his hours of disgust, came to comfort his family and revive in the heart of the marchioness a tenderness which she often reproached herself with not giving entirely to God.

Madame de Chauvelin still loved her husband, and when she had prayed all day, Father Delar, her spiritual director, would call her attention to the fact that she had spoken to God only of her well-beloved husband.

The marchioness had reached the point where she neither expected nor hoped for her husband upon earth. She flattered herself, good and pious creature that she was, to merit sufficiently well of God to be permitted to rejoin Monsieur de Chauvelin in the abode of eternal joys.

The monk scolded Monsieur Bonbonne, and Monsieur Bonbonne the Abbé V—— when the children, sad, or put to do penance, appeared to regret their father, whom, however, they were so little acquainted with.

"It must be owned," said the monk to his penitent, "that this kind of life will damn Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"It must be owned," said the old steward, "that this carrying on will ruin the house."

"Let us admit," said the tutor, "that these children will never have glory, having had no emulation."

And the angelic marchioness would smile on all three as she replied to the monk that Monsieur de Chauvelin would be redeemed in time; to the steward, that the economy practiced at Grosbois would make up for the depletion of the treasury so freely bled at Paris; to the tutor, that the children came of good blood, and that good blood was incapable of falsehood.

And during all this time at Grosbois the secular oaks and tender scions grew on, both drawing their sap and vigor from the fruitful bosom of their Maker.

An unhappy day came. On that day the flowers in the park, the fruits in the garden, the waters in the basin, and the stones of the mansion dried up and became bitter and gloomy. It was a disorderly day in this family. The steward Bonbonne presented tremendous accounts to the marchioness, and foretold to her ruin for her children if Monsieur de Chauvelin did not make haste to retrieve his affairs.

"Madame," said he, "after breakfast permit me to exchange twenty words with you."

"Go on, my dear Bonbonne," replied the marchioness.

"Remember, madame," interrupted Father Delar, "that I am waiting for you at the chapel."

"And let me have the honor of reminding the marchioness," said the Abbé V——, "that we have an examination on mathematics and grammar appointed for to-day, without which these two young gentlemen will not work."

The young Chauvelins were beginning to rebel against tasks in Latin and science, under pretext that their father did not care whether they were learned or not.

The marchioness began by taking the arm of Father Delar.

"Father," said she, "I am going to begin with you. My confession will be short, thank God. Here it is: Yesterday I had wanderings of mind during divine service."

"About what subject, my daughter?"

"Upon the subject of expecting a letter from Monsieur de Chauvelin, and it did not come."

"Consider well if that be all."

"That is all," answered the marchioness, with a seraphic smile.

The monk withdrew.

"Now for you, abbé: the examination would be long, there would be grief. When the children complain they do not know their lessons, if they do not know them, and you should report it to me, I shall be forced to scold or punish them. Spare them, spare us, and let us defer the testing of their knowledge to a day that will be more satisfactory for all."

The abbé agreed that the marchioness was right. He disappeared like the monk, who was already to be seen vanishing into the misty depths of the verdant arcades.

"Now for you, Bonbonne," said the marchioness. "You are the last. Shall I also have a good adjustment of your frowning brow and profound sighs?"

"I doubt it."

"Ah! Let us see."

"That is easy; my accounts are terrifically true."

"You frighten me! You have never succeeded in creating alarm in my private cash-box."

"This month your cash-box will know fear, madame—more than fear: it will burst."

"Come, then; have you counted it up with me?" resumed the marchioness, trying to make a jest of it.

"Have I counted it up with you? I believe so, indeed; a pretty difficulty."

"I have never spoken of it to any one, Bonbonne."

"It would be better! But I have no need of that in order to know."

"To know what?"

"The amount of your savings."

"I defy you to know!" exclaimed the marchioness, blushing.

"If that is so, I go straight to the mark. You have twenty-five thousand five hundred crowns nearly."

"Oh, Bonbonne!" interrupted the marchioness, indignantly, as if the steward had indiscreetly penetrated a painful secret.

"The marchioness does not suspect me, I hope, of having fumbled in her strong-box."

"Then--how—"

"How much have you a year for your house? Isn't it ten thousand crowns?"

"Yes."

"How much do you spend? Is it not eight thousand crowns?"

"Yes."

"Have you not been saving up ten years, since Monsieur de Chauvelin has been living at court for ten years?"

"Yes."

"Well, madame, with the interest accruing, you have twenty-five thousand crowns—or you ought to have them."

"Bonbonne!"

"I have guessed. Now, if you have them, you will give them to Monsieur de Chauvelin, then, on his first demand. And if you give them, there will remain nothing to your children in case that Monsieur de Chauvelin should be suddenly carried off."

"Bonbonne!"

"Let us talk openly. Your property is pledged. Monsieur de Chauvelin, on his side, owes seven hundred thousand livres."

"He is worth sixteen hundred thousand."

"Be it so. But the surplus of nine hundred thousand will not satisfy his creditors."

"You frighten me."

"I try to."

"To what end?"

"That you beseech Monsieur de Chauvelin, who spends too much, to alienate immediately, for the benefit of your children, the nine hundred thousand livres that remain; beg him to settle it on you as a dower, or to have it restored to you by a will."

"A will! Good God!"

"There you are again with your scruples! Does a man have to die because he makes a will?"

"To talk of making his will to Monsieur de Chauvelin!"

"There it is! Fearing to disturb the marquis in his joy, in his digestion, his credit, by that ugly word; the future is a word that in happy times always sounds like the word death. Ah! if you fear that—very well, you will ruin your children, and will have the comfort of having spared the ears of the marquis."

"Bonbonne!"

"I am a cipher talking. Read my accounts."

"It is frightful!"

"It would be yet more frightful to expect what I an-

nounce to you. Take the advice of a wise counselor; get into your carriage and make haste to reach the marquis."

"At Paris?"

"No; at Versailles."

"I! in the society that my husband sees? Never!"

"Write, then."

"Will he even read my letter? Alas! when I write to congratulate him or to invite him here, he does not even read what I write; how will it be if I take up the pen of a man of business?"

"Let a friend take that step then, in your stead—me, for example. Oh, say you that he will not listen to me? Yes, but he will listen to me, madame."

"You will make him sick, Bonbonne."

"His doctor will cure him."

"You will make him angry, and anger will kill him."

"No; it is too important to me for him to live. If I were to kill him, it would be after having made him write his will."

And the good man burst into a loud fit of laughter which the marquise took in ill part.

"Bonbonne, by speaking thus it is I that you will kill," murmured she.

Bonbonne respectfully took her hand.

"Pardon me for forgetting myself, marchioness. Order them to put the horses to the carriage, that I may set out for Versailles."

"Ah! God be praised! You will convey my register and— Hold!"

"What is the matter?"

"Can my desires have already been understood?"

"How?"

"You have spoken of my carriage?"

"Yes."

"There it is, in the Avenue du Mail."

"Ah!"

"The family livery."

"Those are the marquis's iron-gray horses."

"Madame! madame!" called the abbé.

"Madame! madame!" cried Father Delar.

"Madame! madame!" cried twenty voices in the grounds, outhouses, and park.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried the children.

"The marquis himself! Oh, can it be true?" murmured the marchioness. "He at Grosbois, and to-day?"

"How do you do, madame?" said the marquis from afar, whose carriage had just come to a halt, and who alighted joyously with gestures of eager delight.

"He himself, sound in body and cheerful in spirit. Thanks, oh, my God!"

"Thank God!" repeated the twenty voices that had announced the arrival of the master and father.

VIII.

A GAMBLER'S OATH.

It was indeed the marquis himself. He tenderly embraced the two children, who had uttered a cry of joy on seeing him, and imprinted a kiss upon the hand of the stupefied marchioness that came from the heart.

"You, monsieur! You!" said she, taking his arm as she spoke.

"Myself. But these children were playing or working. I do not want to interrupt their studies, still less their play."

"Ah, monsieur, for the little time that they have for seeing you, let them give themselves up entirely to the joy of your dear presence."

"Thank God! Madame, they will see me a long while."

"A long while! Until to-morrow evening will it be? You will not go before to-morrow evening?"

"Still better, madame."

"Will you rest two nights at Grosbois?"

"Two nights, four nights, always."

"Ah! tell me how this has come about?" eagerly exclaimed the marchioness, without perceiving that such surprise involved in it a reproach against Monsieur de Chauvelin for his past conduct.

The marquis knit his brow for a moment, then suddenly:

"Have you not prayed to God some that He would restore me to my family?"

"Oh, always!"

"Well, madame, your petitions have been heard. It has seemed to me that a voice was calling me, and I have obeyed that voice."

"And you are going to quit the court?"

"I come to establish myself at Grosbois," interrupted the marquis, stifling a sigh.

"What happiness for me, our dear children, and all our dependents. Ah! monsieur, let me remain in this belief, leave me this joy!"

"Madame, your satisfaction is a balm that cures all my wounds. But tell me, would you like to talk with me a little about our household affairs?"

"Do so—do so," said the marchioness, pressing his hands.

"It seems to me that I saw some very mean-looking horses down there, as I entered our grounds. Are they yours?"

"They are mine, monsieur."

"Horses too old to be of any service."

"Monsieur, those are the horses you gave me the day your son was born."

"When I bought them they were four and a half years old; that was nine years ago, so the creatures are fourteen years old. Fy! such a team for my wife!"

"Ah, monsieur, when I go to mass they manage to pull me still."

"I saw three of them, it seems to me."

"The fourth and liveliest one I have given to my son for his lessons."

"My son to learn to ride on a carriage-horse! Marchioness! marchioness! what sort of a cavalier will you make of him?"

The marchioness cast down her eyes.

"And then you do not mean to say you are reduced to four horses? You have eight, I think, besides two saddle-horses."

"Yes, monsieur; but since you have been away there have been no more hunts nor pleasure rides, so I thought that a saving of four horses, two grooms, and a saddle-room would give me six thousand livres a year at least."

"Six thousand livres, marchioness," murmured Monsieur de Chauvelin, discontentedly.

"It furnishes support to twelve families," replied she.

He took her hand.

"Always good, always perfect. What you do upon earth is always inspired by God from on high. But the

Marchioness de Chauvelin ought not to have to economize."

She raised her head.

"You will say that I spend a great deal," added he. "Yes, I do spend much money and you suffer for the want of it."

"I did not say that, monsieur."

"It is true, nevertheless, marchioness. Noble and generous as you are, you should not have dismissed my people unless compelled by necessity. A groom dismissed is one pauper the more. You have lacked money; I'll mention it to Bonbonne; but from this time you shall want it no more; what I have been accustomed to spend at court I'll now spend at Grosbois; instead of supporting a dozen families, you shall support two hundred."

"Monsieur!"

"And, thank God, I hope that there will be grain enough left to feed a dozen good horses that I have, and which from to-morrow will come to occupy your stables. Did you not say something about repairing the château?"

"The reception-rooms ought to be refurnished."

"All my Paris furniture will come this week. I want to give two dinners every week. There will be hunting."

"You know, monsieur, that I rather dread company," said the marchioness, frightened at the thought of seeing again those uproarious friends from Versailles, whom she deemed the source of capital sins in her husband.

"You shall give the invitations yourself, marchioness. Now Bonbonne will give you the livres, and you will be so good as to blend in one the expenses of Paris and Grosbois."

The marchioness, wild with joy, tried to answer, and could not. She took her husband's hands in her own, kissed them, and with tender glances tried to sound the very depths of his soul, and gave herself up to the enervating influence of that warm atmosphere of pure love that penetrates all that it touches, and conveys life and comfort to the coldest extremities.

"Let us think of those children," said he; "how do you govern them?"

"Very well. The abbé is a man of sense, and is large-minded in his ideas. Would you like me to present him to you?"

"Present the whole household to me. Yes, marchioness."

The marchioness gave a signal, and they saw coming up the shady avenue, whither he had accompanied the boys, the young tutor, each of whose hands rested upon the shoulder of a pupil.

There was in the step, in the gentle swaying of that young oak between two reeds, something of paternal sweetness that greatly pleased the marquis.

"I have a piece of good news to tell you, abbé. Here is the marquis, the head of our house, who has come to stay with us."

"Praised be God!" answered the abbé. "But, alas! it is not possible that the king is dead?"

"No, thank Heaven! But I have bidden farewell to court and the world. I am going to stay here with my children. I am tired of living only by wit and ambition. I want to let the affections expand a little. Here I am near you to make a start. Abbé, are you satisfied with your pupils?"

"As satisfied as it is possible to be, marquis."

"So much the better. Make of them Christians like their mother, and honest men like their grandfather, and—"

"Men of genius, wit, and merit like their father," said the abbé. "I hope to attain to all that."

"You are a valuable man, then, abbé. And you, my old Bonbonne, are you always grumbling? When I was of their age you used to want to initiate me into business even then. I ought to have paid heed to you, and then I should not be so dependent upon your knowledge now."

The children had gone back to their dancing on the grass with all the careless gayety of their years; their father, following their movements with tender emotion, murmured, after a momentary silence:

"Dear children! I'll never leave you again."

"Would that what you say may prove true, marquis!" echoed a grave and sonorous voice from behind him.

Monsieur de Chauvelin turned around and found himself opposite to a monk in a white gown, with a severe and calm countenance, who saluted him after the manner of his order.

"Who is that holy father?" asked he of the marchioness.

"Father Delar—my confessor."

"Ah! your confessor," repeated he, turning slightly pale. Then in a lower tone: "I have need of a confessor, in fact, so the gentleman is welcome."

The monk, adroit, and used to the manner of the great, took care not to catch at this proposition; but he registered it in his memory. Apprised by the steward of the state of affairs some days since, he resolved to charge himself with the negotiation, and not to let an opportunity escape which was as propitious for attending to the affairs of the Almighty as those of the marchioness and her children, perhaps.

"Might I presume to ask news of the king, marquis?" asked the monk.

"Why so, father?"

"The report has spread abroad that Louis XV. was soon going to give up to God an account of his reign. Those rumors are generally only the precursors of Providence. His majesty will not live long, believe me."

"Is that your belief, father?" asked Monsieur de Chauvelin, growing sadder and sadder.

"It were to be desired, then, that he should make amends for all the scandals of which he has been the theme, and do penance."

"Monsieur," said the Marquis de Chauvelin, with animation, "confessors ought to wait in silence until they are called for."

"Death does not wait, monsieur; and as for me, I have long been awaiting a word from you, and it does not come."

"Me! Oh! my confession will be long; but it is not yet ripe."

"Confession consists altogether in repentance, in regret for having sinned; and the greatest of all sins, as I have just said, is scandal."

"Oh! scandal! everybody adds something to it. There is not one of us who might not furnish matter for evil-speaking. Heaven thinks not of punishing us for the mischief-making of others."

"Heaven punishes disobedience to its laws. Heaven

punishes presumption. Warnings are sent to us, and if we neglect them nothing can save us any more."

Monsieur de Chauvelin did not reply, and began to reflect. The marchioness, seeing him engaged in conversation, discreetly retired, praying God with all her soul that it might bear fruit. After a long moment of silence, during which the monk was watching him, Monsieur de Chauvelin suddenly turned toward him, and said:

"Holy father, you are right. I repent of having been too long young, and I will confess to you, for I feel it, I feel it, that death is near."

"Death! You believe this, and yet you make no preparation for the welfare of your soul or your heirs. You fear to die, and think not of making the will that is so indispensable in the present state of your affairs. I beg your pardon, marquis; my zeal and devotion to your illustrious house carry me too far, perhaps."

"No; you are right again, father. However, reassure yourself; that will is made. I have nothing to do but sign it."

"You fear to die, and you are not in a condition to appear before God?"

"May He have mercy on me! I was born in the Christian religion, and I want to die a Christian. Come to-morrow, pray, and we shall continue this interview that will restore me repose of spirit."

"To-morrow! Why to-morrow? Death neither draws back nor stops."

"I have need to collect my thoughts. I can not so quickly forget the life that I have led. I regret it, perhaps. Thanks for your counsels, father; they will bear their fruit."

"God grant it! But you know the axiom of the wise men: 'Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.'"

"I owe you gratitude already. I was cast down, and you have raised me up; one can not do everything at once, father."

"Oh, marquis! it takes but a minute to make of a guilty man a penitent; of a damned soul an elect one. If you would—"

"It is well, it is well, father—to-morrow. Here is the dinner-bell ringing."

He dismissed him with a wave of the hand, and plunged into a leafy avenue. The tutor approached Father Delar.

"What is the matter with the marquis? I do not recognize him any longer. He is anxious, gloomy, haggard, he who is ordinarily so gay."

"He has a presentiment of his approaching end, and he thinks of mending his ways. It is a magnificent conversion, and will bring great honor to my monastery. Oh! if the king—"

"Ah! ah! appetite comes with eating, father, as it seems; nevertheless, I fear that your wishes in that respect are useless. His majesty is hard to persuade, and besides has those who minister to his spiritual necessities. They talk of Bishop de Senez as of a rough champion."

"Oh! the king is not so lacking in faith as you pretend. Remember his sickness at Metz, and the sending away of Madame de Châteauroux."

"Yes; but then Louis XV. was young, and there was no question of expelling Jeanne Vaubernier—two considerations that change the situation terribly. Lastly, you have time to think over it, my dear Monsieur Delar; meanwhile, the dinner-bell has rung. The thing is not to keep the marquis waiting. Thank God he does not dine with us so often."

The dinner at which Father Delar and Abbé V—— appeared in time was indeed served up to father, mother, and children. Never had the marchioness appeared so gay; never had she taken so much pains to do the honors of her table.

The cook had surpassed himself. The beautiful fish from the ponds, the fine poultry from the coops, the most delicious fruits from the conservatory and trellises, reminded the marquis of the delights of home when there is a feast to be gotten up for a beloved master.

The valets, as proud as could be that they were to resume so illustrious a service, were seen to don their newest liveries, and watch the master's eyes to see if they could gratify his least desire or prevent the smallest cause for annoyance.

But the marquis very soon lost that fine appetite of which he had boasted upon his arrival. The table seemed to him deserted; the silence observed out of joy and respect for him appeared to him a mournful silence. By degrees

sadness encroached upon his heart and countenance; he let his hand drop listlessly near the plate that was still full, and he forgot the glasses in which sparkled the wine of Aï with the luster of diamonds, and the old wine of Burgundy with the glow of rubies, being thirty years old.

From sadness the marquis sunk into the deepest despondency, each person following sympathetically the mournful tenor of his thoughts.

A tear escaped suddenly from his eyes; it drew a sigh from the marchioness. He did not observe it.

"I have reflected," said he all of a sudden to his wife. "I wish to be buried, not at Boissy St. Leger, like my parents, but at Paris, in the Church of the Carmelites, on Maubert Square, with my ancestors."

"What suggests that reflection, monsieur? We surely have plenty of time to think of that, I suppose," said the marchioness, suffocated with grief.

"Who knows? Let them call Bonbonne; let him be told to wait for me in my library; I want to work with him an hour. Father Delar has shown me the necessity for this. You have an excellent confessor, madame, in that man."

"I am happy that you approve of him, monsieur; you can address yourself to him in all confidence."

"I shall do so, too, and that to-morrow. If you will excuse me, madame, I'll go upstairs."

The marchioness lifted her eyes to heaven and gave thanks in a mental prayer. She followed her husband with her eyes as he left the room with Bonbonne, and turning to her boys, she said to them:

"This evening, my children, ask God to put it into your father's heart to take up his abode with us altogether, to keep him in the same benevolent dispositions that he now manifests, and to grant him grace to put his resolutions in practice."

Once within his library, the marquis said:

"Come, my old Bonbonne, let us work! let us work!"

And with a feverish ardor he shook out all the papers, trying to classify and distinguish them.

"There! there!" said the old man; "since we are so well started on the right road, my dear master, let us not race on too fast. You know one loses time by making too much haste."

"Time presses, Bonbonne. I tell you, time presses."

"Come then."

"I tell you that he to whom God vouchsafes this joy of preparing himself for the last journey can never work too fast. Be quick, Bonbonne; to work!"

"Going on at that rate, with such heat, monsieur, you will get a pleurisy, congestion, or high fever, and in that way will have succeeded in proving your will to be just in time."

"No more delay. Where are the statements of assets?"

"Here they are."

"And those of indebtedness?"

"Here."

"Sixteen hundred thousand livres of deficit? The devil!"

"Two years of rigid economy will fill up that ditch."

"I have not two more years in which to economize."

"Oh! oh! you would run me mad! What! with such health?"

"Did you not tell me that the notary had drawn up a very clever plan for a will, in which he assured to my sons the whole of their property when they come of age?"

"Yes, monsieur, if you gave up for six years the fourth part of the revenue of their lands alone."

"Let us see that plan."

"Here it is."

"My eyes are a little weak. Will you read it aloud?"

Bonbonne set himself to read each of the articles. The marquis from time to time testified a lively satisfaction.

"The plan is a good one," said he at last; "so much the more as it leaves to Madame de Chauvelin three hundred thousand livres a year—double what she has now."

"You approve of it, then?"

"Of every point."

"I can then transcribe this document?"

"Transcribe it."

"And then you will have to give it validity by setting to it your seal and signature."

"Do it quick, Bonbonne, do it quick!"

"Why, you are no longer even reasonable! I have spent a half hour in reading that document to you, and it will require at least an hour for the recopying of it."

"Ah! if you knew in what a hurry I am! Stop! Dictate to me, and I'll write it all out with my own hand."

"Not at all, monsieur, not at all; your eyes are all inflamed now. If you should only keep on working a quarter of an hour longer you will have fever after the headache coming on."

"What must I do during this hour that you say I shall have to wait?"

"Go out to walk, join the marchioness, and enjoy the pleasant air on the lawn, and then I am going to cut my pens and then look out paper. I'll answer for it that I'll get on faster by myself alone than three lawyers' clerks put together."

The marquis obeyed with a sort of repugnance, and yet he felt dull and agitated.

"Be calm now," said Bonbonne to him; "are you afraid of not having time to sign? One hour, I tell you. What the devil! marquis, you will surely live sixty-one minutes longer."

"You are right," resumed the marquis; and he went down-stairs, where the marchioness was waiting for him.

Seeing him calmer and his countenance more cheerful, she said:

"Ah, well! have you worked well, monsieur?"

"Oh, yes, marchioness, yes. I've done good work, with which I hope you and your sons will be content."

"So much the better. Your arm; let us take a walk. The conservatories are open; would you like to visit them?"

"Anything that you like, marchioness, anything."

"And you will sleep well after this walk. If you could realize the joy with which your *valets de chambre* sheeted your great bed."

"Marchioness, I shall sleep as I have not done for ten years. I leap for joy only to think of it."

"You think, do you, that you will not find it too dull here with us?"

"No, marchioness, no."

"And that you will get accustomed to our country people?"

"Yes, without any trouble. And if the king—I repent of having been a little rude to him, perhaps—if the king forgets me, all is well."

"The king! Ah, monsieur," said the marchioness, tenderly, "you sighed just now on speaking of his majesty."

"I love the king, marchioness; but really believe—"

He did not finish. A sound of a whip and a horse's bells cut short his speech.

"What is that?" said he.

"A courier, to whom they open the gates," answered the marchioness. "Can it be for you?"

"No; it is strange. A courier to whom all bow, and who is admitted to our private grounds can only come from—"

"From the king," murmured the marchioness, turning pale.

"From the king!" shouted the courier in a loud voice. "The king!"

And Monsieur de Chauvelin rushed forward to meet that courier, who had already intrusted his letter to the *major-domo*.

"A letter from the king! Alas!" said the marchioness to Father Delar, whom the report of the arrival of this missive had brought out with all the rest.

The marquis offered the courier wine in a silver goblet—an honor that was justified by the respect paid to royalty by every nobleman, even when represented by a valet. He opened this letter. It contained what follows, written by the monarch with his own hand:

"My Friend,—You have hardly been gone twenty-four hours, and yet it seems to me that I have not seen you for months. Old people who love each other ought not to be separated. Will they have time to meet together again? I am sad unto death. I need you. Come! Do not deprive me of a friend under pretext of wanting to defend my crown. That is the surest way of attacking it, on the contrary; and so long as you shall hold it up by your presence, I shall feel it to be stronger than ever. Should I find you by my couch to-morrow morning upon awakening, it will be the signal for a happy day.

"Your very affectionate Louis."

"The king recalls me," said Chauvelin, deeply touched. "I must set out instantly; he can not do without me. Let them put the horses to the carriage."

"Oh!" replied the marchioness, "so soon after so many sweet promises."

"You shall hear from me very soon, madame."

"Marquis, my copy is done!" exclaimed Bonbonne, running up from the distance.

"Well! well!"

"And there is nothing more to do but to read it over and sign it."

"I have not time. Later."

"Later! But remember what you said just now."

"I know it—I know it."

"No more delay."

"The king can not wait."

"But you forget your children. You forget the fate of your family."

"I forget nothing, Bonbonne; but I must be off, and that instantly. My children, the future of my family. Ah! think of it, Bonbonne, that is all assured."

"A signature—nothing but a signature."

"See here, my old friend," said the marquis, radiant with joy; "I am so bent on settling this affair correctly, that if I should die before I had signed it, I swear to you to come back here from the other world—and it is far—expressly to append my signature. Be easy on that score now. Farewell!"

And hurriedly embracing his wife and children, forgetting all that was not the king and court, rejuvenated by twenty years, he sprung into his carriage that bore him away toward Paris.

The marchioness and all her household, so happy awhile ago, remained near the gate, gloomy, abandoned, dumb from despair.

IX.

VENUS AND PSYCHE.

THE day after his message to Grosbois, the first word of Louis XV. was to ask for the Marquis de Chauvelin, and his first look a searching one to see if he were there.

The marquis had arrived in the night, and was in place when the king left his bed.

"Well and good," said the king, "here you are, marquis. Dear me! how long your absence did seem!"

"Sire, it is the first, and shall be the last one. If I leave you now it will be forever. But the king is very good to find my absence long. I only stayed away from him twenty-four hours."

"Really, dear friend, in this case it is that devil of a prediction which rings in my ears; so that, not seeing you at your ordinary post, I fancied that you were dead, and, you dead, you understand—"

"Perfectly, sire."

"But don't let us say any more about that. You are here, and that is the essential thing. It is true that the countess bears us a little grudge—you because you said what you did; me for having recalled you after such an outrage; but pay no heed to that ill-humor; time heals everything, and the king will aid time."

"Thanks, sire."

"Come; what did you do during your exile?"

"Only think, sire, I have failed to be reconciled to Mother Church."

"I understand. You begin to repent of having sung the praises of the seven mortal sins."

"Oh! if I had only sung them!"

"My cousin De Conti was talking to me about them again yesterday, and he was carried away with them."

"Sire, I was young then, and impromptus seemed easy to me. I was there at the L'île Adam, alone with seven charming women. The Prince de Conti was out hunting; I stayed at the château and made verses upon them. Ah! that was a good, fine time, sire."

"Marquis, do you take me for your confessor, and is that your repentance?"

"My confessor! Ah, yes, your majesty is right. I had just made an appointment for this morning with a priest of Grosbois."

"Oh! the poor man! What a chance he lost for learning! Would you have told him everything, Chauvelin?"

"Absolutely everything."

"Then the session would have been long."

"It would indeed, sire. Besides my own sins, I have so many sins of other people upon my conscience—above all, I have so many—"

"Of mine, haven't you? Those, Chauvelin, I'll dis-

pense with your avowing. People need only confess for themselves."

"And yet, sire, sin is terribly epidemic at court. I have only just come, and already they have been telling me of a strange adventure."

"An adventure, Chauvelin? and to whose account have they put it—that adventure, I mean?"

"And to whose account do they always put good adventures, sire?"

"Why, of course, it must be to mine."

"Or to that of—"

"Or to that of the Countess du Barry, you mean?"

"You have rightly divined, sire."

"How! The Countess du Barry has sinned? Plague upon it! Tell me about it, Chauvelin."

"I do not exactly say that the adventure is a sin in itself; I say that it came into my mind when sins were referred to."

"Come, marquis, what is that adventure? Tell it to me directly."

"Directly, sire?"

"Yes; you know kings do not like to wait."

"Plague take it! Sire, it is grave."

"Whew! Could she have got into another contest with my little daughter-in-law?"

"Sire, I do not say no."

"Ah! The countess will end by quarreling with the dauphiness, and then, faith—"

"Sire, I believe that at this minute the countess is in the heat of a quarrel."

"With the dauphiness?"

"No; but with another little daughter-in-law of yours."

"With the Countess de Provence?"

"Exactly so."

"Well! Behold me in a fine predicament! Let us see, Chauvelin—"

"Sire?"

"And it is the Countess de Provence who complains?"

"They say so."

"Then the Count de Provence is going to make abominable travesties upon that poor countess. She has to be on her guard; she will be scourged in good fashion."

"Sire, it will simply be a just requital."

"Yes?"

"Picture to yourself Madame de Rosen—"

"That charming little brunette who is the Countess de Provence's intimate friend?"

"Yes; at whom your majesty has been casting many glances for a month past."

"Oh! they have scolded me enough about it in a certain place, marquis. Well?"

"Who has scolded you, sire?"

"Why, the countess, of course."

"Ah, well! Sire, the countess has scolded you—you? That is well; but on the other side she has done better than scold."

"Explain yourself, marquis; you frighten me."

"Sire, you may well be shocked. I say nothing to the contrary."

"How? Is it so grave?"

"Very grave."

"Speak."

"It seems that—"

"What?"

"You see, sire, that it is harder to tell than it was to do."

"Really, you alarm me, marquis. Up to this time, I thought that you were jesting. But if a really grave thing has been done— Come; let us talk seriously."

At that moment the Duke de Richelieu entered.

"News, sire!" said he, with a smile at once gracious and uneasy—gracious because he was bent on pleasing the monarch; uneasy because he was anxious to counteract the influence of that favorite recalled to Versailles after one day of exile.

"News? And whence comes that news, my dear duke?" asked the king.

The king looked around him, and saw the Marquis de Chauvelin laughing in his sleeve.

"Your laugh is against the grain," said he.

"Sire, the storm is going to burst upon us. I see that from the sad looks of Monsieur de Richelieu."

"You are mistaken, marquis. I did announce news, to be sure; but I did not undertake to tell it."

"How, then, am I to learn this news?"

"A page of Madame de Provence is in your antecham-

ber with a letter from his mistress. Let your majesty give his orders."

"Oh! oh!" said the king, who would not have been sorry to put the whole blame upon Monsieur or Madame de Provence, whom he did not like; "since when have the sons of France and their wives taken to writing to the king instead of presenting themselves at the king's morning reception?"

"Sire, probably the letter gives your majesty the reason for this breach of etiquette."

"Duke, take this letter and give it to me."

The duke bowed, went out, and returned a second afterward with the letter in his hand.

Then handing it to the king, he said:

"Sire, do not forget that I am the friend of Madame du Barry, and that I constitute myself her advocate in advance."

The king looked at Richelieu, opened the letter, and visibly frowned as he ran over its contents.

"Oh!" murmured he, "for this time that is too strong; and you have undertaken a bad cause, duke. In truth, Madame du Barry is mad."

Then turning to the officers, he added:

"Let a messenger be sent instantly to Madame de Rosen from me; ask how she is, and say that I shall receive her as soon as I am dressed, before going to mass. Poor marchioness! Dear little woman!"

Each one looked at the other. Was a new star rising on the horizon of favor?

Nothing more possible, on the whole. The marchioness was a pretty young woman. Appointed lady of honor to Madame de Provence a year ago, she had become intimate with the favorite, and visited her unceremoniously in her rooms, where the king had often seen her. But upon the princess, who had taken exceptions at this intimacy, expostulating, she had suddenly broken off relations with her, at which Madame du Barry had taken great offense.

That was what the court knew about it.

This letter, the contents of which nobody knew, had had a serious effect upon the king. He appeared absorbed in thought during the remainder of his bed-chamber audience, hardly dropped a word to his gossips, hurried up the proceedings, and dismissed his visitors sooner than usual, after

having enjoined it upon Monsieur de Chauvelin not to be out of the way.

The ceremony of the king's levée having terminated, everybody retired, and as his majesty was informed that Madame de Rosen was in attendance, he gave orders for her to be introduced.

Madame de Rosen made her appearance in most pathetic style. She was dissolved in tears, and fell on her knees before the king.

The king raised her up.

"Pardon me, sire," said she, "for having shielded myself under august influence in seeking to gain access to your majesty; but indeed I was so desperate—"

"Oh, I pardon you with all my heart, madame, and I owe gratitude to my grandson for having had a door opened to you, which henceforth stays wide open to you. But let us come down to the fact—to the principal thing."

The marchioness cast down her eyes.

"I am pressed for time, madame," continued the king; "they are waiting for me to hold mass. Is what you write me strictly true? Did the countess allow herself to maltreat you?"

"Oh! you see how I blush for shame, sire. I come to demand justice of the king. Never has a woman of rank been treated so abominably."

"What! really?" asked the king, smiling in spite of himself. "Treated like a disobedient child in every particular?"

"Yes, sire, by four maids, in her presence, in her boudoir," answered the young woman, lowering her eyes.

"Plague upon it!" resumed the king, in whom that detail gave rise to a crowd of ideas. The countess did not brag of her project. Then with the eyes of a satyr: "And how was that brought to pass? Tell me, marchioness."

"Sire," resumed the poor woman, blushing more and more, "she invited me to breakfast. I excused myself on the plea of my duties to her royal highness requiring me to be in place at eight o'clock. She sent me word back that she would not detain me long; and, in fact, sire, I came from there a half hour ago."

"You may rest easy, madame. I shall have an explanation with the countess, and justice shall be done you; but out of regard for your own interest, I enjoin it upon you

not to noise this adventure abroad. Above all, do not let your husband learn of it; husbands are devilishly squeamish about such things."

"Oh! the king must know that so far as I am concerned there'll be no talking; but my enemy, the countess, I am very sure that she has already boasted of what she has done to her most intimate friends, and to-morrow the whole court will know about it. Oh, dear! dear! how miserable I am!"

And the marchioness hid her face in her hands at the risk of washing away her rouge with her tears.

"Be comforted, marchioness," said the king. "The court could not have a prettier whip than you. And if they talk of it, it will be through envy, as once upon a time in Olympus they spoke of the same adventure happening to Psyche. I know some among our stiff-necked ones who would not be so easily consoled as you can console yourself; you, marchioness, you have nothing to lose by it."

The marchioness made a bow and blushed more still, if that were possible.

The king beheld that blush and devoured those tears.

"Come," said he, "return home, and wipe those pretty eyes; this evening at our card-party we'll arrange all that. It is I who make you the promise."

And with that gallantry and good form characteristic of his race, the king escorted the young woman back to the door, in doing which he had to pass by the crowd of courtiers, who were as much puzzled and surprised as could be.

The Duke d'Ayen, captain of the body-guard on duty, drew near the king and bowed before him in silence, waiting for his orders.

"To mass! to mass! Duke d'Ayen, now that I have performed my duty as confessor," said the king.

"So pretty a penitent can only have committed pretty sins, sire."

"Alas! poor child, it is not her own that she expiates," went on the king, going along the grand corridor leading to the chapel.

The Duke d'Ayen followed one step in the rear, near enough to hear and reply, but without being on a line with him, as etiquette prescribed.

"One would be happy to be her accomplice, even in a crime—a venial crime, be it understood, sire."

"Her crime is that of the countess."

"Oh! as for those, the king knows them all."

"Undoubtedly they calumniate that good countess. She is extravagant—mad even—as upon the occasion in question, for which I shall reprimand her; but she has an excellent heart. One need not tell me any harm of her—I would not believe it. To be sure, I well know that I am not her first lover, and that I succeed Radix de St. Foy in her good graces."

"Yes, sire," replied the duke, with his customary malice, hidden under the most exquisite manners, "as your majesty succeeded Pharamond."

The king, in spite of all his wit, was not able to cope with this doughty antagonist unless by getting angry. He felt that this would make him ridiculous, hence he pretended not to comprehend. He made haste to address a word to a knight of St. Louis, whom he met on his way. Louis XV. was sweet-tempered and accommodating; he allowed his familiar friends many liberties, and, provided that they amused him, he made light of the rest. The Duke d'Ayen, above all, had the privilege of saying whatever he chose. Madame du Barry, all powerful as she was, had never dreamed of contending with him. His name, his position, and his wit, in the first place, seemed to put him above attack.

During mass the king had wanderings of mind. He was thinking of the tempest that would be aroused by this last freak of Madame du Barry if it should come to the ears of the dauphin. This prince had just the evening before rebuked the countess, who, against his will, had had a nephew of hers—Vicomte du Barry—appointed an equerry of his household.

"Do not let him come near me," the dauphin had said, "or I'll have him driven away by my men."

Certainly these dispositions did not promise indulgence for the coarse jest in which the countess had indulged herself. Louis XV. then left the chapel, feeling himself to be in a quandary. Before repairing to the council-chamber, he called at the apartments of the dauphiness. He found her in full dress, with a superb diamond admirably mounted adorning her brow.

"That is a magnificent jewel you wear, madame," said the king.

"Do you think so, sire? Does not your majesty recognize it?"

"I?"

"To be sure, since your majesty gave orders for it to be brought to me."

"I do not know what you mean?"

"And yet it is a fact very easy to explain. Yesterday a jeweler came to the palace at Versailles with this jewel set around with *fleurs-de-lys* and ornamented by the crown of France, ordered by your majesty. Since God has taken the queen away, I alone had the right, it was thought, to wear this ornament. It is to me, then, that he has offered it—doubtless by your order, and according to your intention."

The king flushed and made no reply.

"Here again is a bad augury," thought he. "The countess had little to do to give me new trouble with her silly tale of the marchioness. Will you come to our card-party this evening, madame?" continued he aloud.

"If your majesty so orders it."

"Order you! My daughter, I beg you to come; you will give me pleasure thereby."

The dauphiness bowed coldly. The king saw that he was not going to succeed in propitiating her. He made a pretext of the Council, and went out.

"My children do not love me," said he to the Duke d'Ayen, who had not left him.

"The king is in error. I can assure your majesty that you are at least as much beloved by them as they are by you."

Louis XV. understood the innuendo, but did not show it. He had made a resolve, for his part. He had come near exiling the Duke d'Ayen ten times a day, and the king, after the depression he had experienced upon losing Monsieur de Chauvelin, understood better than ever before how indispensable to him was the presence of his leading courtiers.

"Pshaw!" said he, "they will find that they tickle me in vain; they shall not fret me. This manner of thing will last as long as I do, and my successor may get out of it as best he can."

Strange heedlessness, for which the unhappy Louis XVI. was so fatally to pay the penalty.

X.

THE KING'S GAME.

On entering the house of the countess, whom he was intending to reprimand, the king was received with a lowering brow, behind which he felt to be smothering a mine of secret wrath all ready to explode.

Louis XV. was weak. He dreaded scenes, whether they came from his daughters, grandsons, daughters-in-law, or his mistress; and yet like all men placed between their mistress and their family, he was continually exposing himself to them.

This day he wanted to prevent the struggle that he saw impending by giving himself an auxiliary.

Also, after having cast upon the countess that glance which had sufficed him for consulting the barometer of her good humor, he gave a look all around him.

"Where is Chauvelin?" asked he.

"Monsieur de Chauvelin, sire?" said the countess.

"Yes—Monsieur de Chauvelin."

"But it seems to me, and you know better than anybody else, that I am not the one who ought to be asked for news of Monsieur de Chauvelin, sire."

"And why so?"

"Because he is no friend of mine, and, not being one of my friends, it is plain that you should look for him elsewhere than in my house."

"I had told him to come and wait for me at your house."

"Ah! well, he has dispensed with obeying the king's orders; and, faith, he will have done better to disobey you than to come, as he did the last time, to insult me."

"It is well—it is well; I want you to be reconciled," said the king.

"With Monsieur de Chauvelin?" asked the countess.

"With everybody, zounds!"

Then turning toward the countess's sister, who was making a show of setting some grotesque figures in order upon a pier-table:

"Chon," said he.

"Sire?"

"Come here, my daughter."

Chon drew near the king.

"Be so good little sister, as to give the order that Chauvelin be sent for immediately."

Chon bowed, and left the room to obey the king.

Madame du Barry tossed her head, and turned her back upon his majesty.

"Pray, what is there in that to vex you, countess?" asked the king.

"Oh, I understand," replied she, "that Monsieur de Chauvelin is in the full enjoyment of your favor, and that you could not do without him, he is so desirous of pleasing you and respects so much those whom you love."

Louis felt that the storm was coming. He wanted to cut off the water-spout by a cannon-shot.

"Chavelin is not the only one lacking in respect for me and what belongs to me."

"Oh, I know it! For that matter," exclaimed Madame du Barry, "your Parisians, your Parliament, even your courtiers, without counting those whom I shall not name, are all lacking in respect to the king, and that emulously, at pleasure vying with one another in the lengths that they go."

The king looked at the impertinent young woman with a feeling that was not devoid of compassion.

"Do you know, countess," said he, "that I am not immortal, and that you play a game which may land you in the Bastile or drive you from this kingdom as soon as I shall have closed my eyes?"

"Nonsense!" said the countess.

"Oh! do not laugh; it is as I tell you."

"Indeed, sire, and how is that?"

"In two words I am going to broach the question."

"I await the onslaught, sire."

"What is this story about the Marchioness de Rosen, and what unwarrantable liberty is this that you have taken with the poor woman? Do you forget that she has the honor of belonging to the household of the Countess de Provence?"

"I, sire? No, indeed!"

"Well, then, answer me. What is this about your having allowed yourself to inflict upon her, the Marchioness de Rosen, punishment such as is given only to children?"

"I, sire?"

"Yes, you," said the king, grown impatient.

"Ah! that is good!" exclaimed the countess. "I did not expect to be blamed for having executed the orders of your majesty."

"My orders!"

"Certainly. Will the king deign to call to mind his reply to me when I complained to him of the marchioness's impoliteness?"

"Faith! No. I do not recollect now."

"Well, the king said to me: 'What would you have, countess; the marchioness is a child that ought to be whipped.'"

"What? Zounds! That was no reason for doing it," cried the king, blushing in spite of himself; for he remembered having said precisely the words that the marchioness had just quoted to him.

"Well," said the marchioness, "the least desires of your majesty being laws for his devoted servant, she made haste to execute this one as all others."

The king could not help laughing at the imperturbable seriousness of the countess.

"It is I, then, who am the guilty one?" asked he.

"Most assuredly, sire."

"Then it is for me to expiate the fault."

"Apparently."

"Be it so. In that case, countess, you will invite the marchioness to supper, in my name, and you will put under her napkin the colonel's commission that her husband has been soliciting for the past six months, and which I should certainly not have given him so soon but for this circumstance. In this manner the injury will be repaired."

"This is very well—that is to say, so far as the marchioness's feelings are concerned. And now for mine."

"Now yours?"

"Yes; who will repair them?"

"What injury has been done to you, pray?"

"Oh! that is charming—play the astonished!"

"I do not play it, my dear; I am very frankly and seriously so."

"You just come from a call upon the dauphiness, do you not?"

"Yes."

"Then, you know very well the trick that she has played me?"

"No; upon my word. Say!"

"Well, yesterday my jeweler brought us at the same time—to her a stream, and to myself a tiara of diamonds."

"After?"

"After?"

"Yes."

"Well, after? After having received her stream, she asked to see my tiara."

"Ah! ah!"

"And as my tiara had *fleurs-de-lys* for its setting, she said: 'You have made a mistake, my dear Monsieur Bœhmer. This tiara of diamonds is not for the countess, but for me; and the proof is that here are three lilies of France, that since the queen's death I alone have the right to wear.'"

"So that—"

"So that the jeweler, intimidated, did not dare to resist the order given him by the dauphiness to leave the diamond tiara, and hastened to tell me that my diadem had been waylaid upon the road."

"Well, countess, what would you have me do about it?"

"Do! Why, I want you to have my diadem restored to me."

"Have your diadem restored?"

"Certainly."

"By the dauphiness? You are mad, my dear."

"How! I mad?"

"Yes. I would rather give you another one."

"Ah, good! I have only to count upon that."

"Upon the faith of a gentleman, I promise it to you."

"Good! And I shall have it in a year—in six months at the earliest? How funny it is!"

"Madame, let that delay be a warning to you."

"A warning to me? And in what respect?"

"In respect to being less ambitious in the future."

"Ambitious! I?"

"To be sure. You well know what Monsieur de Chauvelin said the other day."

"Oh! but that was your Chauvelin, who only talks nonsense."

"Lastly, though, who had authorized you to wear the armorial bearings of France?"

"Come, then, who authorized me? You yourself."

"I?"

"Yes, you. The pet dog that you gave me the other day wore them upon its collar; why, then, should I not wear them upon my head? But I know where that idea comes from. I have been told."

"What more have you been told? Come!"

"Why, your projects, of course."

"Well, countess, tell me my projects. Upon my honor, it would give me pleasure to know them."

"Will you deny that there is a proposition to marry you to the Princesse de Lamballe, and that Monieur de Chauvelin and all the clique of the dauphin and dauphiness are urging you to the marriage?"

"Madame," replied the king, severely, "I will not deny but that there may be some truth in what you say, and I'll even add that I might do worse. You know it better than I do, countess; you who have had me sounded as to another marriage."

That word closed the countess's mouth, who seated herself in an ill-humor at the other end of the room, and broke two pieces of bric-a-brac.

"Ah! Chauvelin was right," murmured the king. "The crown is ill fitted for Cupid's hands."

There was a moment of pouting silence, during which Mademoiselle du Barry returned.

"Sire," said she, "Monsieur de Chauvelin is nowhere to be found. They think he is shut up in his own room; but it was in vain that I went myself to ring and appeal to him at his own door, for he refused to reply."

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed the king. "Has any accident happened to him? Is he sick? Quick! quick! let the door be broken open!"

"Oh, no, sire, he is not sick," sharply spoke up the countess, "for on leaving the Prince de Soubise and brother John in the parlor of the Bull's Eye, he announced that he would be at work all day on urgent matters, but that he would not fail to join the king's card-party in the evening."

The king profited by this concession on the part of the countess, which opened a sort of armistice.

"Perhaps he is writing his confession for the edification of his Camaldule."

Then turning to the countess, he said:

"By the way, countess, do you know that medicine of Bordeu's works wonders? Do you know I mean to take no other? A fig for Bonnard and Lamartinière, with all their dieting! He is going to rejuvenate me, upon my word!"

"Pshaw! sire," said Chon, "why is your majesty forever talking about old age? Dear me! Your majesty is no older than everybody else, are you?"

"Well, that is good!" exclaimed the king. "You are like that great scamp D'Aumont, to whom I was complaining the other day of having no teeth, and who answered me, displaying a villainous set of grinders: 'Well, sire, who is it that has teeth'?"

"For my part," said the countess, "I forewarn you that I'll bite you until the blood comes if you continue thus to sacrifice me to everybody else."

And she approached, taking her seat again near the king, showing him a row of pearls in which it was impossible to see a menace.

And the king, braving the bite, touched with his lips the beautiful rosy lips of the countess, who made a sign to Chon. Chon picked up the broken pieces of china.

"Well!" said she, "all that falls into the ditch is for the soldier."

And casting back a last look upon the king and her sister, she said in a very low tone:

"Decidedly, I believe that Bordeu is a great man."

And she went out, leaving her sister in a fair way toward reconciliation.

The king's game began at six o'clock. Monsieur de Chauvelin had kept his promise, and was one of the first persons there. The countess, on her side, came in full dress, because of the presence of the dauphiness, who, it was known, would be present.

The marquis met the countess, and they greeted each other with the blandest of smiles.

"Bless me, Monsieur de Chauvelin," said the countess, with one of those enigmatical smiles so much practiced at court, "how red you are! One would say that you were

about to have an attack of apoplexy. Marquis! marquis! consult Bordeu! There's no safety outside of Bordeu!"

Then turning to the king with one of her rarely bewitching smiles, she said:

"Rather, ask the king."

Monsieur de Chauvelin bowed.

"I shall certainly not fail to do it, madame."

"And you will perform the duty of a faithful subject. You must care for your health, my dear marquis, since you are only to precede by two months—"

"On the contrary, I could wish that it were I who were to precede you," said the king, "for you would be sure of a hundred years of life, Chauvelin. Then I can only repeat the countess's advice to you—take Bordeu, my friend, take Bordeu."

"Sire, whatever be the hour marked for my death—and God alone knows the death-hour of each man—I have promised the king to die at his feet."

"Fy, Chauvelin! People make promises that are not kept. Rather ask these ladies; but if you are as sad as that, my dear friend, it is we who will die of grief simply from looking at you. Come, Chauvelin; are we to play this evening?"

"As your majesty chooses."

"Will you win from me a game of ombre?'

"I am at the king's service."

They seated themselves at the tables.

Monsieur de Chauvelin and the king sat facing each other at a particular table.

"There, Chauvelin, attention," said the king; "have your answer ready. If you are sick, I never felt better in my life. I am in such fine spirits, too; guard your money well. I tell you, I have to pay Rotiers for a mirror and Bœhmer for a diamond tiara."

Madame du Barry bit her lips.

But instead of replying, the marquis painfully rose in his chair.

"Sire, it is very warm," murmured he.

"That is so," responded the king, who, instead of being angered, as would have been the case with Louis XIV. at this breach of the laws of etiquette, amiably covered up the blunder. "Yes, Chauvelin, it is very warm, thank God! for in the month of April our evenings are apt to be cool."

The marquis attempted to smile, and with difficulty picked up the cards.

The king resumed:

"Come; you are the ombre, Chauvelin."

"Yes, sire," stammered the marquis.

And he bowed his head.

"Have you a fine hand? Let's see. Ah! As my ancestor, Henry IV., said, 'how cross you are this evening!'"

Then, having looked at his own cards:

"Ah! dear friend, I do believe that this time you are done for."

The marquis made a violent effort to speak, and turned so red that the king stopped in alarm.

"But what is the matter with you, Chauvelin?" asked the king. "Come, answer!"

Monsieur de Chauvelin stretched out his hands, let his cards escape, uttered a sigh, and fell with his face on the carpet.

"My God!" cried the king.

"A fit of apoplexy!" murmured some courtiers who had pressed forward.

They raised the marquis up, but he did not stir.

"Take it away! Take *that* away!" said the king, with horror. "Take it away!"

And leaving the table, with a nervous chill upon him, he linked his arm in that of the Countess du Barry, who dragged him off to her own house without his once turning his head to look at that friend from whom he could not be separated the evening before.

The king having gone, none thought any more of the marquis, deprived of feeling.

His body remained some time overturned upon the arm-chair—for they had lifted him up to see if he were dead, and had let him fall backward.

That corpse produced a singular effect, left all alone in that deserted salon, in the midst of chandeliers all ablaze, and flowers that were wasting their perfume.

At the end of an instant a man appeared on the threshold of the solitary salon, looked around the apartment, saw the marquis lying prone on the arm-chair, approached him, placed his hand upon his heart, and in a dry, clear

voice, at the very moment that the big clock struck seven, said:

"He has passed away. A beautiful death, I declare! A beautiful death!"

That man was Doctor Lamartinière.

XI.

THE VISION.

THE morning of that same day Father Delar had arrived early at Grosbois, with the intention of saying mass at the chapel, and of not allowing the good dispositions to cool which the marquis had manifested the evening before. But then Madame de Chauvelin told him, with tears in her eyes, all her fears for the salvation of the neophyte, already so compromised, who had escaped them at the first word of friendship sent to him by the king.

She kept her confessor to dinner, in order to hold a long talk with him, and find in his wise counsels the courage of which she had need after this new deception.

Madame de Chauvelin and Father Delar were walking until quite a late hour in the afternoon, upon rising from table, and had seats brought to the edge of the pretty lake, in order to breathe there the first breezes of spring after quite a warm day.

"Reverend father," said the marquise, "in spite of all that you say to me which is reassuring, that departure of Monsieur de Chauvelin makes me very uneasy. I know what an attachment he has to court life. I know that the king has entire dominion, not only over his mind, but yet more over his heart, and his majesty's conduct is so far from being well regulated— I think that it is not a sin, father, to speak thus. Alas! the scandal is only too public!"

"I assure you, madame, that the marquis has received a salutary impression; it is a first offense; time and Providence will do the rest. I was speaking of it this morning to our reverend prior; he has ordered prayers to be said in the convent; you too pray, my daughter, you who are most interested in this great work; let your children pray; let us all pray. To this end I have offered the holy sacrifice of the mass in the chapel of the château, and shall do so every morning."

"In all the twenty years that I have been united to Monsieur de Chauvelin, I have never let an hour pass without asking God to touch his heart. Until now the Lord has not heard my prayers. I have lived alone, most of the time in grief and tears, as you know yourself, father. I have groaned in solitude over errors that I could not combat. Apparently God did not deem me pure enough to render me victorious. More suffering was needed wherewith to purchase this grace. I will suffer. The will of God be done!"

Meanwhile, behind the marquise and Father Delar the abbé was in company with the children, whose amusements he shared, being almost as young as they—that is to say, eighteen years old.

"Brother," said the elder boy, "do you know what is the fashionable game at court now?"

"Yes, to be sure; father told me yesterday at dinner; it is ombre."

"Well, let us play ombre."

"Impossible. In the first place, we have no cards, and then we do not know how to play it."

"There is one who is the ombre." *

"And the other?"

"Bless me! Why, the other is afraid, I suppose, and then he loses."

"Brother," said the elder boy, "don't let's speak of cards. You know that our mother does not like it, and claims that cards bring misfortune."

At the same moment Madame de Chauvelin arose from her seat.

"Mother is going away into the park," answered the younger, following her with his eyes, "and consequently she will not see us. Besides, our tutor, who is with us, would warn us against it if it were wrong."

"It is always wrong," said the tutor, "to cause one's mother pain."

"Oh! but my father plays at court," replied the child, with that tenacious logic, which, like all weaknesses, catches hold of any prop that is a little reassuring. "We can play, then, since father plays."

The abbé could think of no answer to that, and the boy went on:

* Shadow.

"Stop! There is mother bidding adieu to Father Delar, whom she has accompanied as far as the front gate. He is going away. Let us wait. Just as soon as Father Delar is gone, mamma will go back to her oratory. We'll return to the château behind her. We'll ask for cards, and we'll play."

The boys followed their mother in the gathering twilight until her figure was lost in the distance.

It was one of those charming evenings that precede the heat of May; the trees, still without leaves, gave promise of coming foliage by their swollen and downy buds. Some more forward, such as the chestnut and linden-trees, began to burst their sheathes and bring to light the vernal treasures that they inclosed.

The air was calm, and began to be peopled by those insects that are born with spring and disappear with autumn. They were seen sporting by the thousand in the last rays of the setting sun, which made of the river a broad ribbon of gold and purple, while to the east—that is to say, toward that part of the park whither Madame de Chauvelin had directed her steps, all objects began to blend together in that beautiful bluish tint which belongs only to certain privileged epochs of the year.

There was an intense calmness mingled with an infinite splendor in all nature.

In the midst of this serenity the castle clock struck seven, and its tones vibrated long in the evening breeze.

Suddenly the marquise, who was bidding farewell to the priest, uttered a great cry.

"What is the matter?" asked the reverend father, coming back; "and what hurts you, madame?"

"No—nothing! nothing! Oh! oh!" and the marquise turned pale visibly.

"But you cried out! You certainly felt some sort of pain! Why, at this very moment you are pale. What is the matter? In the name of Heaven, what is the matter with you?"

"Impossible! My eyes deceive me!"

"What do you see? Say, say, madame!"

"No, nothing."

The priest insisted.

"Nothing, nothing, I tell you," repeated Madame de Chauvelin. "Nothing."

And her voice died away upon her lips, and her gaze remained fixed, while her hand, white as an ivory hand, was slowly raised to indicate an object that the monk saw not.

"If you please, madame," insisted the monk, "tell me what you see?"

"Oh! I see nothing. No, no; it is folly!" exclaimed Madame de Chauvelin, "and yet— But look! Look there!"

"Where?"

"There! there! Do you see?"

"I see nothing."

"You see nothing there—there?"

"Absolutely nothing; but you, madame; you say what you see!"

"Oh! I see—I see— But no, it is impossible."

"Tell."

"I see Monsieur de Chauvelin in his court dress, but pale, and walking with slow steps; he has passed there! there!"

"Heavens!"

"Without seeing me, do you understand? Or, if he did see me, without speaking to me—which is yet more strange."

"And at this moment are you seeing him all the time?"

"All the time."

And the marquise's finger and eyes indicated the direction that the marquis followed, remaining invisible still to Father Delar.

"And where is he going, madame?"

"In the direction of the château. There he goes, near the big oak! There, he grazes the bench! Stop! stop! There he is going near to the children. He turns and goes behind the wall. He disappears! Oh! if the children are still where they were it is impossible for them to miss seeing him."

At the same instant a cry rang out that made Madame de Chauvelin shudder.

It was the two children who had uttered that cry.

It had resounded so piercingly sad in the darkness that the marquise came near falling to the ground.

Father Delar held her up in his arms.

"Do you hear?" murmured she. "Do you hear?"

"Yes," replied Father Delar; "some one gave a cry."

Almost immediately the marquise saw, or, rather, heard her two boys running toward her. Their rapid steps, as they ran along panting, sounded upon the gravel walk.

"Mother! mother! have you seen?" cried the younger.

"Oh, ma'am, do not heed them!" said the abbé, running behind them, all out of breath from trying to overtake them, so rapid had been their flight.

"Well, my children, what is it?" asked Madame de Chauvelin.

The two boys, however, made no answer, but only pressed close up to her side.

"Come," said she, "what has happened? Speak!"

The two children looked at each other.

"You tell," said the elder to the younger.

"No, you tell."

"Ah! well, mamma, can it be that you did not see as well as we?"

"Do you hear?" exclaimed the marquise, whose arms were uplifted; "do you hear, father?"

And with her icy hands she pressed the monk's trembling fingers.

"Seen! Seen whom?" asked he, with a shudder.

"Why, father," said the younger of the children. "Did not you and mother see him? He came that way, though, and must have passed very near you.

"Oh! what happiness!" said the elder boy, clapping his hands. "Papa has come back!"

Madame de Chauvelin turned to the abbé.

"Madame," said he to her, comprehending her questioning glance, "I can assure you that these little gentlemen are mistaken when they claim to have seen the marquis. I was near them, and declare that no person—"

"And I, sir," said the elder, "I tell you that I saw papa as plainly as I now see you."

"Fy, Abbé V——! fy! How ugly it is to lie!" said the younger boy.

"It is strange," said Father Delar.

The marquise shook her head.

"They have seen nothing, ma'am; positively nothing," repeated the tutor.

"Wait," said the marquise.

Then addressing herself to her two sons with that sweet

maternal accent which must please the great Father of us all, said:

"My children, do you say that you have seen your father?"

"Yes, mamma," answered the two children in unison.

"How was he dressed?"

"He had on his red court suit, his blue ribbon, a white vest embroidered in gold, velvet pantaloons like his coat, and silk stockings, buckled shoes, and his sword at his side."

And while the elder boy described in detail his father's costume, the younger one nodded acquiescence.

And while the younger boy testified to his accuracy, Madame de Chauvelin, with a hand more and more frigid, pressed the monk's hand. It was thus that she too had seen her husband pass.

"And was there nothing peculiar about your father—tell me?"

"He was very pale," said the elder.

"Oh! yes, very pale," said the younger; "one would have said a dead man."

Everybody shuddered — mother, tutor, confessor — so great was the terror expressed by the child's words.

"Where was he going?" asked the marquise in a voice that she tried in vain to make firm.

"In the direction of the château," said the elder boy.

Said the younger: "I turned around as I was running, and saw him going up the front steps."

"Do you hear? Do you hear?" murmured the mother in the monk's ear.

"Yes, madame, I hear; but I own that I do not understand. How could Monsieur de Chauvelin have passed through the front gate on foot without stopping in front of you? Again, how could he have passed his sons without also stopping? Lastly, how could he have entered the château without any of the servants seeing him, or asking for any one?"

"You are right," said the abbé, "and all that is strikingly true."

"Besides," continued Father Delar, "the proof can easily be obtained."

"We are going to see about it," cried the two children, preparing to run to the house.

"And I, too," said the abbé.

"And I, too," murmured the marchioness.

"Madame," replied the Camaldule monk, "here you are all agitated and white from affright; and supposing that it should be Monsieur de Chauvelin—and I own that it may be he—is there anything to be frightened at?"

"Father," said the marquise, looking into the monk's face, "if he had come thus mysteriously and unattended, do you not think that the event would be very strange?"

"That is why we are all mistaken, madame. That is why we must believe that undoubtedly some stranger has introduced himself, with evil design very likely."

"But an evil-doer, no matter how malicious he may be," said the abbé, "has a body. You would have seen him, and I, too, father, which is exactly what is strange about it. The marchioness and these young gentlemen saw, and it was only we who did not see."

"Never mind," resumed the monk; "in either case it would be better for madame and her sons to retire to the orangery, while we go to the château; let us call out the men, and ascertain what has happened. Go, madame; go!"

The marchioness was powerless. She obeyed mechanically, and retired into the orangery with her two sons, without having for a single instant lost sight of the château windows.

Then falling on her knees, she said:

"Let us pray without ceasing, my sons, for there is a soul beseeching me to pray at this very minute."

Meanwhile, the monk and abbé had kept on their way to the château; but having come in view of the front door, they had stopped and opened a consultation as to whether they had not better go first to the servants' quarters and collect a force for searching the buildings, as at this hour they would find the men together at their supper.

This proposition had been made by the ever-prudent monk, and the abbé was on the point of acceding to it, when they saw a small door open and Bonbonne appear. The old steward came running toward them as fast as his great age would allow. He was pale, tremulous, gesticulating, and talking to himself.

"What is the matter?" asked the abbé, going a few steps to meet him.

"Oh! Good Lord! Good Lord!" exclaimed Bonbonne.

"What has happened to you?" continued the priest.

"It has happened to me to have a terrible vision."

The monk and abbé exchanged looks.

"A vision!" repeated the monk.

"Come, now, that is impossible," said the abbé.

"It is so, I tell you," persisted Bonbonne.

"And what sort of a vision is it. Tell us."

"Yes, what have you seen?"

"I saw—I do not yet know exactly what; but, in short, I saw—"

"Explain yourself, then."

"Well, I was in my ordinary work-room, below the marquis's big library, and communicating with it, you know, by a private staircase. I was again examining into the titles, to be sure that we had forgotten nothing in the writing out of the document which was so necessary to the future fortunes of the family. The clock had just struck seven. Suddenly I heard walking in the room above which I had myself shut up yesterday behind Monsieur the Marquis, and the key to which I had in my pocket. I listened. There were many steps. I listened again. Those steps sounded above my head. There was some one upstairs. That was not all; I heard the drawers of Monsieur de Chauvelin's desk opening. I heard the arm-chair move that stood in front of the desk, and that, without any precaution which struck me as more and more extraordinary. My first idea was that thieves had penetrated into the château. But either those thieves were very imprudent or very confident about what they were doing. Then what should I do? Call the servants? They were in their own rooms at the other end of the house. While I was going for them, the thieves would have time to make good their escape. I took my double-barreled gun. I went up by the little staircase that leads from my room to the marquis's library. I got there on tiptoe. As I stealthily crept up the last steps, I pricked up my ears more anxiously than ever. I not only heard a continuous moving about, but groaning, rattling in the throat, and finally inarticulate sounds that penetrated to the bottom of my heart, for I must confess that the nearer I came the more did I seem to hear and recognize the voice of the marquis."

"Strange!" exclaimed the abbé.

"Yes, yes; strange!" echoed the monk.

"Go on, Bonbonne, go on!"

"Finally," continued the steward, drawing near to his two questioners, as if to seek for a refuge near them, "finally I looked through the key-hole, and saw a great light in the room, although it was dark and the shutters were closed, and closed by myself."

"After that?"

"The noise continued. There were sounds like the death-rattle. I had not a drop of blood in my veins. And yet I wanted to see to the end. I made an effort. I put my eye again at the key-hole, and distinguished wax candles lighted around a casket."

"Oh! you are deranged, my dear Monsieur Bonbonne," said the monk, shivering in spite of himself.

"I saw it; I saw it, father."

"But you must have seen wrong," said the abbé.

"I tell you, abbé, that I saw the thing as I see you. I tell you that I have lost neither my presence of mind nor my good sense."

"And yet you ran away in a fright."

"Not at all. On the contrary, I remained praying God and my patron saint to give me strength. But suddenly a great fracas was heard, the wax lights were put out, and all given over to darkness once more. It was not until then that I left, and came up with you. Now we are united. Here is the library key. You are churchmen, and consequently exempt from superstitious terrors. Will you come with me? We will find out for ourselves the state of affairs."

"Let us see," said the priest.

"Let us see," repeated the abbé.

And all three entered the château, not by the small door, however, through which Bonbonne had come out, but through the front door that had admitted the marquis.

On passing under the vestibule, before a great family clock surrounded by the De Chauvelin arms, the steward held aloft the wax candle which he had just lighted.

"Ah!" said he, "there is something strange; some one must have meddled with that clock and put it out of order."

"Why do you think so?"

"Because I have seen it here in the château ever since I

was a child, and during all this time it has been invariably right."

"Well?"

"Well! Do you not see that it has stopped?"

"At seven o'clock!" said the monk.

"At seven o'clock!" repeated the abbé.

And once more the two exchanged looks.

"At last," murmured the abbé.

The monk muttered a few words that resembled a prayer.

Then they mounted the grand staircase, traversed the apartments of the marquis, closed and deserted. Those immense rooms, illumined by the trembling light of a single torch that the steward was bearing, were solemn and awe-inspiring.

On reaching the library door their hearts palpitated wildly; they stopped and listened.

"Do you hear?" asked the steward.

"Perfectly," said the abbé.

"What?" asked the monk.

"How! You do not hear that horrible sound like the groan of some one in mortal agony?"

"We do," said together the two companions of the steward.

"I was not mistaken, then," resumed he.

"Give me the key," said Father Delar, making the sign of the cross. "We are men, honest men—Christians; we ought not to be afraid of anything."

He opened the door, and whatever confidence the man of God had in his Lord, his hand trembled as he introduced the key into the lock. The door opened; all three stopped upon the threshold.

The chamber was empty.

Slowly they penetrated into the immense cabinet, surrounded by books and pictures. Everything was in its place save the marquis's own portrait, which had broken the nail that had held it up, had become detached from the wall, and fallen to the ground, the canvas being pierced in the place where was the head.

The abbé pointed out the portrait to the steward, and drew a breath of relief.

"Behold the cause of your terror," said he.

"Yes, that accounts for the noise in part," said the steward; "but those moans that we heard just now, did the portrait utter them?"

"The fact is," said the monk, "that we did hear groans."

"And upon that table?" suddenly exclaimed Bonbonne.

"What—what is there upon that table?" asked the abbé.

"That hardly extinguished taper," said Bonbonne, "that wax candle which is still smoking; and touch that stick of sealing-wax which is not even cold yet."

"It is true," said the two witnesses of this almost miraculous incident.

"And," continued the steward, "that seal * which the marquis carried on his watch-chain, and with which the envelope addressed to his notary is sealed with the seal, however not pressed down so as to close it."

The abbé dropped into a chair more dead than alive. He had not the strength to flee.

The monk remained standing; and without visible fright, like a man detached from the things of the world, he tried to penetrate this mystery of the cause of which he was ignorant, whose effect he saw, but whose end he did not comprehend.

Meanwhile, the steward, to whom devotion to his master's family lent courage, turned over one after the other the pages of the will that he had examined with his master just the day before.

Arrived at the last one, a cold sweat came out upon his forehead.

"The will is signed!" murmured he.

The abbé bounded upon his seat, the monk bent over the table, and the steward looked first at one and then at the other.

A terrible moment of silence ensued between these three men, and the bravest of the three felt his hair stand out upon his head.

Finally all three cast their eyes again upon the will.

A codicil had been added, of which the ink was not yet dry.

It was conceived in these terms:

* *Cachet volant*, as the French call such a one.

"My will is that my body be interred at the Church of the Carmelites on Maubert Square, near my ancestors.

"Done at the Château de Grosbois on April 27th, 1774, at seven o'clock in the evening.

"Signed CHAUVELIN."

The two signatures and the codicil were traced with a hand less firm than that in the body of the will, but nevertheless perfectly legible.

"A *de profundis,* gentlemen," said the steward, "for it is evident that the marquis is dead."

The three men piously fell upon their knees and recited together the funeral prayer; then after a few minutes of solemn reflection they rose to their feet.

"My poor master," said Bonbonne, "had given me his word to come back and sign this will, and he has kept it. God have pity upon his soul!"

The steward shut up the will in its envelope, and taking up his torch again, gave a sign to his companions to go out.

Then aloud:

"We have nothing more to do here," said he; "let us go in search of the widow and orphans."

"You are not going to give that packet to the marquise?" said the abbé. "Do no such thing, I pray you, in the name of Heaven!"

"Be easy," said the steward; "this packet shall only leave my hands to pass into those of the notary. My master chose me for his testamentary executor, since he has permitted me to see what I did see, and hear what I did hear. I shall not rest until his last wishes have been carried out, when I shall go to join him. Eyes that have been the witnesses of such things ought to close quickly."

And even as he thus spoke, Bonbonne, being the last to leave the library, had shut to its door. All three had descended the staircase, had cast a timid glance upon the clock, whose hands had stopped at seven o'clock, and clearing the front doorsteps, they set out for the orangery, where the marquise and her two children were awaiting them.

All three were still praying, the mother on her knees, her two sons standing near to her.

"Well!" cried she, rising precipitately when she saw the three men. "Well!"

"Continue your prayer, madame," said Father Delar;

L. of C.

"you were not mistaken. By a special favor—doubtless granted to your piety—God has permitted the soul of Monsieur de Chauvelin to come and bid us farewell."

"Oh! my father!" exclaimed the marchioness, lifting her clasped hands to heaven; "you see well that I was not deceived."

And falling upon her knees, she resumed her interrupted prayer, signing to the children to imitate her example.

Two hours afterward a sound of horse's hoofs reverberated in the court-yard, making Madame de Chauvelin raise her head—she being seated between the two beds of her sleeping children.

A voice was heard on the stairs crying:

"A courier from the king!"

At the same moment a footman entered and handed the marchioness a long letter sealed with black.

It was the official tidings that the marquis had died at seven o'clock in the evening, taking part in a game with the king.

XII.

THE DEATH OF LOUIS XV.

AFTER Monsieur de Chauvelin's death, the king was rarely seen to smile. In every step that he took it would have seemed that the specter of the marquis walked by his side. Carriage-riding alone seemed somewhat to divert his mind. Excursions were multitudinous. The king went from Rambouillet to Compeigne, from Compeigne to Fontainebleau, from Fontainebleau to Versailles—to Paris never. The king had a horror of Paris, after his revolt with regard to blood baths.

But all these fine residences, instead of distracting his mind, took him back to the past, the past to memories, memories to reflection. Madame du Barry alone could divert him from these sad, bitter, and deep reflections, and verily it was pitiable to see the trouble that young and pretty creature took to warm up, not the body, but the heart of the old man.

Meanwhile, society was disintegrating like the monarchy. To the philosophical infiltrations of Voltaire, D'Alembert, and Diderot, succeeded Beaumarchais' showers of scandal.

Beaumarchais published his famous "Memorial" against Counselor Goezmann, and that magistrate, a member of the Maupeon tribunal, did not dare to take his seat in public again.

Beaumarchais had the "Barber of Seville" repeated, and they were already talking of the hardihood that was going to bring upon the scene the philosopher Figaro.

An adventure of Monsieur de Fronsac had caused a scandal. Two adventures of the Marquis de Sade had excited horror.

Society had become utterly corrupt.

All these anecdotes were very shameful, very impure, but they were the only ones that amused the king. Monsieur de Sartines made a journal of them—that was another of Madame du Barry's bright ideas—a journal that his majesty read every morning in his bed. That journal was made up in the Parisian houses of ill-fame, and specially in that of the famous Gourdan.

One day the king learned through this journal that Monsieur de Lorry, Bishop of Tarbes, had had the effrontery, the day before, to return to Paris, bringing with him, in his uncovered carriage, Madame Gourdan and two of her boarders. This was going it a little too strong. The king had the grand almoner apprised of it, who summoned the bishop to appear before him.

Fortunately, it chanced that all was explained to the greatest glory of the prelate's virtue and charity. On returning from Versailles, the Bishop of Tarbes saw three women coming on foot along the highway, their carriage evidently having broken down. Moved by pity for their discomfiture, he offered them a place in his carriage. Gourdan found the proposal pleasing, and accepted.

His friends pretended not to credit this simplicity on the part of the prelate, and one or another would say to him: "How! you do not know Gourdan? Really, now, that is incredible!"

In the midst of all this, the famous musical war between the admirers of Gluck and Piccini was declared, and the court divided into two parties.

The dauphiness, young, poetical, of a musical temperament, and a pupil of Gluck, thought our operas nothing but a collection of *ariettes* more or less graceful. On seeing the tragedies of Racine acted, she conceived the idea of

sending "Iphigenia in Aulis" to her master, and of inviting him to pour the floods of his music over the harmonious verses of Racine. At the end of six months the music was composed, and Gluck himself brought his score to Paris.

Once arrived there, Gluck became the favorite of the dauphiness, and had admission at all hours into her drawing-room.

One must get accustomed to everything, and above all to the grandiose. At its first production, Gluck's music did not produce all the effect that it should have done. Empty heads and callous hearts do not care to be made to think; noise suffices them; thought is a weariness, sound a distraction.

The society of the old *régime* preferred Italian music, sonorous bell-ringing, to the melodious organ.

Madame du Barry, out of opposition, and because the dauphiness had brought German music to the front, Madame du Barry took the side of Italian music, and sent to Piccini for his *libretti*. Piccini sent some compositions, and the young and old society divided into two camps.

This was because ideas altogether new were springing up in the midst of that ancient French society like unknown flowers that force their way up between the disjointed flagstones of a gloomy court-yard, between the moss-covered stones of an ancient château.

These ideas were English; gardens were labyrinthine walks winding among trees, lawns, baskets of flowers, pots of grass; there were cottages, morning walks without powder or rouge, with a simple, broad-brimmed straw hat, the only adornment of which was a bunch of blue corn-flowers or daisies; there were walkers guiding a fiery steed, followed by jockeys in black caps, round jackets, and leathern knee-breeches; there were four-wheeled phaetons which were all the rage; princesses dressed like shepherdesses, actresses gotten up like queens. There were Duthé, Guimard, Sophie Arnould, the Prairie, and Cléophile covering themselves with diamonds, while the dauphiness, the Princess de Lamballe, Mesdames de Polignac, De Langeac, and D'Adhèmar, who only asked to cover themselves with flowers.

And at sight of all this new society advancing to meet the unknown, Louis XV. bowed his head more and more.

In vain the giddy countess whirled around him, buzzing like a bee, light as a butterfly, resplendent as a humming-bird; only occasionally did the king lift up his heavy brow, upon which the seal of death was every instant becoming more visibly stamped.

This was because time was gliding by; because they had entered upon the second month since Monsieur de Chauvelin's death; because they had come to May 3d, and because on the 28th of the month it would be exactly two months since the marquis had died.

Then, as if everything conspired to add force to the mournful prophecy, the Abbé de Beauvais had preached at court, and in his sermon on the necessity of preparation for death and the danger of final impenitence, he had exclaimed:

"And yet forty days, sire, and Nineveh will be destroyed."

So that when he had thought of Monsieur de Chauvelin, the king was thinking of Monsieur de Beauvais, so that when he had said to the Duke d'Ayen:

"It will be two months, on May 23d, since Chauvelin died," he turned then to the Duke de Richelieu and murmured: "Forty days was what that diabolical Abbè de Beauvais said, was it not?"

And Louis XV. added:

"I could wish that these forty days were past!"

That was not all; the almanac of Liéges, in regard to the month of April, had said:

"In the month of April, a lady, who is one of the greatest favorites, will play her last part."

So that Madame du Barry sung the chorus to the king's lamentations, and said of the month of April what he said about the forty days—that is to say:

"I could wish with all my heart that this cursed month of April were past."

In this cursed month of April, which frightened Madame du Barry so much, and during these forty days that were the king's passion, bad signs were multiplied. The embassador from Genoa, whom the king saw frequently, was struck by sudden death. The Abbé de Laville, coming to his levée to thank him for the place of director of foreign affairs, which he had just given to him, fell at his

feet, seized with apoplexy in his presence. Lastly, the king being in the chase, a thunder-bolt struck near him.

All this rendered him more and more gloomy.

They had hoped something from the return of spring, that Nature, which in the month of May shakes off its shroud, that earth grown young again, those trees now donning their spring-time robes, that air which is peopled with living atoms, those fiery breaths that pass with the breezes and seem like souls seeking for bodies; all that might restore some life to that inert matter, some movement to that worn-out machine.

Toward the middle of April, Lebel saw at his father's house a miller's daughter whose singular beauty struck him. He thought that this was a morsel which might arouse some appetite in the king, and spoke to him of her with enthusiasm. Louis XV. languidly consented to this proffer of distraction.

In general, before reaching the king, the young girls whom Louis XV. was to honor or dishonor by his royal favors were inspected by doctors, then by Lebel, and lastly came the king.

This time the young girl was so fresh and pretty that all these precautions were neglected, and even had they been taken it would certainly have been difficult for the most skillful physician to have discerned that she had taken the small-pox a few hours before.

The king had already had that disease in his youth; but two days after his connection with that young girl, it manifested itself for a second time.

A malignant fever capped the climax.

On April 29th the first eruption made its appearance, and the Archbishop of Paris, Christopher de Beaumont, hastened to Versailles.

This time the situation was strange. The administration of the sacraments, if their necessity was perceived, could only take place "after the expulsion of the concubine," and this concubine, who belonged to the Jesuitical party, of which Christopher de Beaumont was the chief; this concubine, as the archbishop himself said, through the overthrow of Minister Choiseul and the Parliament, had rendered such great services to religion that it was impossible to dishonor her canonically.

The leaders of that party, besides Monsieur de Beaumont

and Madame du Barry, were the Duke d'Aiguillon, the Duke de Richelieu, the Duke de Fronsac, Meupeon, and Terray.

All were struck down by the same blow that expelled Madame du Barry. They had no motive then for declaring themselves against her.

The party of Monsieur de Choiseul, on the contrary, which was everywhere, even in the king's bed-chamber, demanded the expulsion of the favorite and a prompt confession. This was a curious spectacle, since it was the party of philosophers, Jansenists, and atheists that were urging the king to confess; while it was the Archbishop of Paris, the monks and devotees, who desired the king to refuse to confess.

Such was the strange state of affairs when on May 1st, at half past eleven o'clock in the morning, the archbishop presented himself at the palace, in order to visit the sick king.

At all events, on learning of the archbishop's arrival, poor Madame du Barry fled.

It was the Duke de Richelieu who went to meet the prelate, being ignorant as yet of his intentions.

"Monseigneur," said the duke, "I adjure you not to frighten the king by that theological proposition which has killed so many ill persons. But if you are curious to hear a recital of pretty, jolly sins, sit you down there, and I will confess to you instead of the king; and I'll tell you tales such as you have never heard since you have been Archbishop of Paris. Now, if my proposal does not suit you, if you are positively bent upon having the king confess to you, and are determined to renew at Versailles the scenes of the Bishop of Soissons at Metz, if you want to dismiss Madame du Barry with parade, you will insure the triumph of the Duke de Choiseul, your cruelest enemy, from whom Madame du Barry has done so much to deliver you, and you will persecute your friend for the profit of your foe. Yes, monseigneur, your friend, and so much your friend, that yesterday she again said to me: 'Let the archbishop forbear to disturb us, and he shall have his cardinal's hat; it is I who take it upon myself, and I'll be responsible for it.'"

The archbishop had let Monsieur de Richelieu talk on, for, although of the same opinion as he, at bottom it was

proper that he should have the air of being persuaded. Fortunately, the Duke d'Aumont, Madame Adelaïde, and the Bishop de Senlis added their persuasions to those of the marshal, and gave the prelate arms against himself. He seemed to yield, and promising to say nothing, entered the presence-chamber of the king, to whom he said nothing at all about confession. This so satisfied the august patient that he immediately had Madame du Barry recalled, whose beautiful hands he kissed, weeping for joy.

On the next day, May 2d, the king found himself a little better. Instead of Lamartinière, his physician in ordinary, Madame du Barry had got him to call in her two doctors, Lorry and Bordeu. These two doctors had recommended themselves, in the first place, by concealing from the king the nature of his disease, by preserving silence as regarded his true condition, and above all by putting far from him the idea that he was sick enough to have recourse to the priests.

This improvement in the health of the king permitted the countess to resume momentarily her free demeanor, her ordinary way of talking, and pretty, winning manners. But at the very minute when by dint of wit and spirit she had succeeded in making the patient smile, Lamartinière, who had not been excluded from the palace, appeared on the threshold of the door, and, offended by the preference which had been given to Lorry and Bordeu above himself, walked straight up to the king, felt his pulse, and shook his head.

The king had submitted, regarding him, however, with terror. This terror was still increased when he saw the discouraging sign made by Lamartinière.

"Well, Lamartinière?" asked the king.

"Well, sire, if my colleagues have not told you that the case is grave, they are fools or liars."

"What do you think that I have, Lamartinière?" asked the king.

"Why, sire, it is not hard to see. Your majesty has the small-pox."

"And you say that you have no hope, my friend?"

"I did not say that, sire. A doctor never despairs. I only say that if your majesty is not a very Christian king in something more than the name, it is time to reflect."

"You are right," said the king.

Then calling Madame du Barry:

"My love," said he to her, "you hear that I have the small-pox, and my sickness is the more dangerous, in the first place, because of my age, and in the next because of my other diseases. Lamartinière has just reminded me that I am the very Christian king and the oldest son of the Church, my love. Perhaps it is going to be necessary for us to separate. I want to avoid a scene like that at Metz. Inform the Duke d'Aiguillon of what I am telling you, that he may arrange for us to separate quietly, if my disease grows worse."

While the king was saying this, the whole party of the Duke de Choiseul were beginning to murmur aloud, accusing the archbishop of faulty complaisance, and saying that to spare Madame du Barry they were going to allow the king to die without the sacraments.

These accusations came to the ears of Monsieur de Beaumont, who, to put a stop to them, resolved to go and take up his abode at Versailles, in the house of the Lazarites, to impose upon the public thereby, and profit by the moment favorable for performing religious ceremonies, really so as not to sacrifice Madame du Barry until the king should be in an utterly desperate condition.

It was the 3d of May when the archbishop returned to Versailles. Arrived there, he waited.

During this time, scandalous scenes were going on around the king. The Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon was of the same mind as the Archbishop of Paris, and desired that all should be done without clamor; but it was not so with the Bishop of Carcassonne, who played the zealot, renewing the scenes of Metz, and crying aloud: "That the last sacraments must be administered to the king; that the concubine must be expelled; that the canons of the Church must be executed; and that the king ought to give an example to Europe and Christian France that he had scandalized."

"And by what right do you give me this advice?" exclaimed the Cardinal de la Roche-Aymon impatiently.

The bishop loosened the pastoral cross from his neck and put it almost under the prelate's nose.

"By the right that this cross gives me," said he. "Learn, monseigneur, to respect this right, and do not let

your king die without the sacraments of the Church, whose oldest son he is."

All this went on in the presence of Monsieur d'Aiguillon. He comprehended all the scandal that would result from such a discussion if it became public.

He entered the king's chamber.

"Well, duke," said the king to him, "have you carried out my orders?"

"With regard to Madame du Barry, sire?"

"Yes."

"I wanted to wait until your majesty should have repeated them. I shall never be in a hurry to separate the king from persons who love him."

"Thanks, duke, but it must be done. Take the poor countess and convey her privately to your country-seat De Rueil; I shall be grateful to Madame d'Aiguillon for the care that she will take of her."

In spite of this very formal request, Monsieur d'Aiguillon would not still hurry the departure of the favorite, and hid her in the château, appointing the next day for her departure. This announcement calmed somewhat the ecclesiastical requirement.

For that matter, the Duke d'Aiguillon appeared to have been justified in detaining Madame du Barry at Versailles, for during the fourth day of the month the king called for her again with such urgency that the duke admitted that she was still there.

"Have her to come, then. Have her to come here!" cried the king.

Madame du Barry returned then for a last time.

The countess left the room bathed in tears. The poor woman, who was kind-hearted, giddy, amiable, and easy-tempered, loved Louis XV. as one loves a father.

Madame d'Aiguillon got Madame du Barry into a carriage with her eldest step-daughter, and carried her to Rueil, there to await the end.

Hardly was she outside the palace grounds before the king was again calling for her.

"She has gone," they answered him.

"Gone!" repeated the king; "then it is time for me to be gone too. Order prayers to be made to Saint Genevieve."

Monsieur de la Vrillière immediately wrote to Parliament

that, in extreme cases, had the right to have the ancient relic opened or closed.

The days of the 5th and 6th passed without any talk of confession, the *viaticum* or extreme unction. The Curate of Versailles presented himself with the end in view of preparing the king for this holy ordinance; but he met the Duke de Fronsac, who gave him his word as a gentleman that he would throw him out of the window at the first sentence that he should repeat.

"If I am not killed by the fall, I shall come straight in again, because it is my right."

But at three o'clock on the morning of the 7th, it was the king who imperiously demanded the Abbé Mandoux, a poor and unsophisticated priest, a good sort of an ecclesiastic whom they had given to him for a confessor, and who was blind.

His confession lasted seventeen minutes.

The confession over, the dukes De la Vrillière and d'Aiguillon wanted to postpone the *viaticum;* but Lamartinière—the special enemy of Madame du Barry, who had insinuated her own medical men into attendance upon the king—drawing near to Louis XV., said:

"Sire, I have seen your majesty in many difficult situations, but never have I admired you as to-day. If you listen to me you will finish directly what has been so well begun."

The king then had Mandoux called, who gave him absolution.

As to that telling reparation which was solemnly to annihilate Madame du Barry, there was no talk of it. The grand almoner and the archbishop had together drawn up the formula which was proclaimed in presence of the *viaticum.*

"Although the king has to render account of his conduct to God only, he declares that he repents of having scandalized his subjects, and that he only desires to live longer for the support of religion and the happiness of his people."

The royal family, augmented by the presence of Madame Louise, who had come out of her convent in order to minister to her father, went to receive the holy communion at the bottom of the staircase.

While the king received the sacraments, the dauphin—

who had been kept away from the king because he had not had the small-pox—wrote to Abbé Terray:

"SIR, THE CONTROLER-GENERAL,—I pray you to have distributed to the poor in the parishes of Paris two hundred thousand livres, that prayers be made for the king. If you think this too much, deduct it from the incomes of the dauphiness and myself.

"Signed, LOUIS AUGUSTUS."

On the seventh and eighth days the disease grew worse. The king felt his body literally going into shreds. Deserted by his courtiers, who dared no longer remain near that living corpse, he had no longer any attendants but his three daughters, who did not leave him for a moment.

The king was frightened. In the terrible gangrene that now attacked his whole body, he saw a direct chastisement from on high. For him that invisible hand which marked him with black spots was the hand of God. In a delirium, so much the more awful because it was not the result of fever, but remorse, he saw flames, he saw the burning gulf, and called upon his confessor, the poor blind priest, his sole refuge, to hold out the crucifix between him and the lake of fire. Then he himself took the holy water, and raising the counterpane and sheets, had his whole body sprinkled with it, uttering groans of terror the while; then he asked for the crucifix, took it in both hands, and kissed it fervently, crying: "Oh, Lord! oh, Lord! intercede for me, for me, the greatest sinner that ever lived!"

It was in such terrific and despairing agony that he passed the ninth day of the month. During that day, which was only one long confession, neither the priest nor his daughters left him. His body was a prey to the most hideous gangrene, and living, the corpse-like king exhaled such an odor that two valets fell asphyxiated; and one of the two died.

On the morning of the tenth day the bones of his hips were visible through the cracked skin; three other valets fainted. Terror took hold upon Versailles. The whole household took to flight.

There were no longer any other human occupants of the palace but the three noble daughters and the worthy priest.

On the tenth, the whole day long was one prolonged agony; the king, already dead, decided that he would not

die. It might have been said that he wanted to throw himself out of the tomb, that bed which was waiting for him. At last, just five minutes before three o'clock A. M., he raised himself up, threw out his arms, and with eyes fixed upon a certain spot in the room, exclaimed:

"Chauvelin! Chauvelin! it is not two months yet!" Then he fell back and died.

Whatever virtue God may have put into the hearts of the three princesses and priest, the king being dead, they thought, like him, that their task was done; besides, all three were already tainted with the grievous malady that had just killed the king.

Provision for the funeral was left for the grand master of ceremonies, who made all his arrangements without once entering the palace.

The night workmen of Versailles were the only ones found who dared to put the king into the leaden coffin which had been prepared for him. He was laid in this last resting-place without balm or aromatics, rolled up in the bed-clothes upon which he had died. Then this leaden coffin was put into a wooden case and the whole borne to the chapel.

On the twelfth he who had been Louis XV. was conveyed to St. Denis; the coffin was in a large hunting-coach. A second carriage was occupied by the Duke d'Ayen and the Duke d'Aumont; then in the third carriage came the grand almoner and the Curate of Versailles. About twenty pages and fifty grooms on horseback and bearing torches formed the *cortège*.

The funeral procession, leaving Versailles at eight o'clock in the evening, got to St. Denis at eleven, and the entrance into the vault was immediately not only closed, but made air-tight, in order that no emanation from that putrid mass might filter from the abode of the dead into the atmosphere of the living.

We have told elsewhere of the joy of the Parisians over the death of Louis XIV. This joy was no less great when they saw themselves rid of him whom, thirty years before, they had surnamed the "Well Beloved."

They rallied the Curate of St. Genevieve upon the efficacy of the chase.

"Of what are you complaining," said he; "is he not dead?"

The next day Madame du Barry received a letter of exile at Rueil.

At the same time Sophie Arnould learned of the king's death and Madame du Barry's exile.

"Alas!" said she, "we are orphaned of father and mother."

This was the only funeral oration pronounced over the tomb of the grandson of Louis XIV.

XIII.

A DINNER AT ROSSINI'S.

In 1840 I returned to Italy for the third or fourth time, and I was commissioned by my good friend Denniée, inspector of the revenues, to carry a lace veil to Madame Rossini, who resided at Bologna with the illustrious composer, to whom "Count Ory" and "William Tell" have given French naturalization papers.

I do not know whether, after I am gone, anything will be left of me; but however that may be, I have adopted the pious custom of at the same time as I forget my enemies, of associating the name of my friends not only with my private life, but my literary life besides. In this way, in proportion as I advance toward the future, I carry along with me all that has borne a part in my past, all that commingles with my present, as a river might do that should not content itself with reflecting the flowers, trees, and houses on its banks, but would force the image of these houses, trees, and flowers to follow it to the very ocean.

Another thing, I am never alone so long as a book of my own lies near me. I open that book. Each page recalls to me a day that is past, and that day is instantly recalled from its dawn to its twilight, instinct with the same emotions that filled it before, peopled by the same persons who acted their parts in it at first. Where was I that day? In what part of the world was I seeking diversion, asking for a souvenir, gathering a hope, a bud that often withers before it bursts into bloom, a flower that often fades before it is fairly open?

Was I visiting Germany, Italy, Africa, England, or Greece? Was I going up the Rhine, praying at the Coliseum, hunting in the Sierra, camping in the desert, or

meditating at Westminster; was I engraving my name upon the tomb of Archimedes or the rock of Thermopylæ? What hand touched mine? Was it that of a king seated on his throne? Was it that of a shepherd keeping his flock? What prince has called me his friend? What beggar has called me his brother? With whom shared I my purse in the morning? Who broke bread with me in the evening? What happy hours have been jotted down in chalk during the last twenty years, and what gloomy ones marked down in charcoal?

Alas! the best of my life already is made up of memories, I am like one of those leafy trees full of birds, silent at midday, but waking up again toward the close of the day, and which, when evening has come, will fill my old age full of the beating of wings and song; thus will they make it gay with their joy, their love, and their din, until death shall touch the hospitable tree in its turn, and the falling tree shall scare away all those noisy songsters, each of which will only be one of the hours of my life.

Only to behold how a single name has just made me turn out of my way and cast me forth from reality into dream-land. The friend who has commissioned me to take charge of that veil for him has since died. What a genial soul he was, too; how lively and inexhaustible as a teller of anecdotes! What pleasant evenings have we spent together at the house of Mademoiselle Mars, another charming person, upon whom death has also breathed, and who went out as a star would go out in the sky of my life.

I was going to Florence, which was the terminus of my journey; but instead of stopping there, I took up the idea of pushing on as far as Bologna and executing my commission in worthy style—that is to say, by delivering the veil in person into the beautiful hands for which it was destined.

It would take three days to go, three to return, and I could not remain less than a day, making seven in all—seven days of labor wasted, lost. But, faith! I was going to see Rossini again—Rossini, who undoubtedly had just exiled himself for fear of yielding to the temptation of composing some new *chef-d'œuvre*.

I remember that it was toward evening that I arrived in sight of Bologna. From a distance the city seemed bathed in a vapor, above which arose, standing out from the som-

ber background of the Apennines, the Cathedral of St. Peter, and those two rivals of the leaning tower of Pisa, La Garizenda and L'Asinelli. Now and then the sun, just about to set, darted a last ray that made the windows of some palaces flare up as if they were ablaze; while the little river of Reno, tinted with all the colors of the sky that it reflected, wound along through the plain like a ribbon of silvered moiré. But by degrees the sun went down behind the mountain; the panes of glass, so brilliant at first, were gradually growing dark. The Reno assumed a dull and leaden hue; then night fell rapidly, enveloping the city in its black veil, which, however, was very soon dotted with thousands of bright points as luminous as those that shone in the sky.

It was ten o'clock at night when, with all my things, I entered the inn of the Three Kings.

My first care was to send my card to Rossini, who responded that, from that moment, his palace was at my disposal. The next day, at eleven o'clock, I was ensconced in his house.

The Palace Rossini is like all Italian palaces, composed of marble columns, frescoes, and paintings, the whole spacious enough to allow of three or four French houses dancing a cotillon within its limits. It is built for summer, never for winter—that is to say, full of air, shade, freshness, roses, and camellias.

In Italy, you know, flowers appear to spring up in apartments and not in gardens, where one sees and hears only cicadas.

Rossini dwelt in this world of salons, chambers, antechambers, and terraces. Always gay, laughing, sparkling with wit and humor; his wife, on the contrary, swept through these same apartments, smiling also, but with slow, dignified step and beautiful face like the Judith of Horace Vernet.

She bowed before me, and I threw over her head that famous black veil which was the cause of my visit to Bologna.

Rossini had already arranged his dinner-party. He desired to have guests present who should be agreeable to me; and knowing that some day or other I was to go to Venice, he had invited a young Venetian poet named Luigi de Scamozza, who had just finished his studies at

that famous University of Bologna, which has given this device to the money of the city: "*Bonnonia docet.*"

I had four hours before me in which to visit Bologna, that I expected to leave the next day, to return, though, later. I begged Rossini to excuse me, and set out on my round, while the illustrious maestro went down into the kitchen to give his whole mind to a dish of *stuffato* served with maccaroni, for the preparation of which Rossini claimed to have no equal in the whole Italian peninsula, since the death of Cardinal Alberoni.

Later, perhaps, I'll tell of the wonders of the university town. I'll describe that "Neptune" in bronze, *chef-d'œuvre* of her own celebrated child, that she had christened with her own name; its cathedral of St. Peter, rich above all in the "Annunciation" of Louis Carrache; her church of St. Petrone, with its famous Meridian di Cassini. I shall measure the inclination of her two towers, the standing text for disputes among the learned, who have not yet been able to decide whether they lean through a caprice of the architect of from the effects of an earthquake; whether they have been made to lean forward by the hand of man or the breath of the Almighty. But to-day, like Scheherazade, I am in haste to get back to my story, and here I am with it.

Six o'clock found us assembled at the house of the celebrated master, seated around a long table placed in the middle of a vast dining-hall, painted in fresco, and open to the air on all sides. The table, in accordance with Italian customs, was covered with flowers and crystallized fruits, all disposed so as to serve as an accompaniment for the famous *stuffato* which was *the* dish of the dinner.

Our guests were two or three Italian men of learning—that is to say, a specimen of those worthy men who carry on discussions for a century, in order to ascertain whether the story of Ugolino is an allegory or a fact; whether Beatrice is an imaginary or a real character; whether Laura had thirteen or only twelve children.

Two or three artists from the Theater of Bologna, among them a young tenor named Roppa, who suddenly discovered that he had a fine voice, and from the kitchen of a cardinal launched forth upon the boards of the Fenicean Theater.

Lastly, that young student-poet of whom Rossini had

spoken to me, with sad, or, rather, melancholy countenance, a noble thinker, at the bottom of whose soul lived the hope of Italian regeneration; an admirable soldier, who to-day, like another Hector, defends that heroic Venice which recalls the impossible marvels of antiquity, by struggling like another Troy, another Syracuse, or another Carthage.

Lastly Rossini, his wife, and I.

The conversation turned upon Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Cimarosa, Pergolese, Beethoven, Grimod de la Reynière, and Brillat-Savarin; and I must say, to the great praise of Rossini, that it was upon these two illustrious gastronomists that he seemed to me to have the clearest and best defined ideas.

Let us hasten to add that he was valiantly supported on this territory of Roppa, who, ignorant of theory, but a man of practical experience, had had ten years' training in cookery without hearing of Carême, as he has since been studying music for four years without knowing anything about Grétry.

All this conversation led me to ask Rossini why he was not composing music.

"Why, I thought that I had given a sufficient reason."

"What was it?"

"I am lazy."

"Is that the only one?"

"I believe so."

"So that, if a director were awaiting you at the corner of the theater and were to put a pistol to your throat—"

"Saying to me: 'Rossini, you are going to make your finest opera, are you not?' "

"'Yes.' "

"'Well, I'll do it.' "

Alas! there was much more bitterness, perhaps, than good nature in this speech. Besides, perhaps I may be wrong, but I have never believed in that good nature of a mighty genius, and every time that Rossini has talked of cookery to me, it has always seemed to me that it was to avoid talking on some other subject.

"Come, Berlioz, answer me, my great musician-poet, is there not, as in the case of Ugolino, some intangible myth as regards that illustrious Pezzarois who adores maccaroni and despises sauerkraut?"

"So," said I to Rossini, "the whole question is reduced to a matter of lying in wait?"

"To nothing else."

"But if, instead of a pistol, a poem should be thrust under your throat?"

"Try it."

"Hold on, Rossini," said I to him; "one strange thing is, that if I were working for you I would change the regular order of things."

"How so?"

"Yes; instead of giving you a poem for which you should supply the music, you should give me a composition, and I would make words to it for you."

"Stop!" said Rossini. "Explain your idea to me, please."

"Oh! it is very simple. In the union of composer and poet one must absorb the other—either the poem kills the composition, or the composition kills the poem. Now, which side ought to make the sacrifice? It must come from the poet, since, thanks to singers, one never hears the words, and thanks to the orchestra, one always does hear the music."

"So you are of the opinion of those who think that fine verses are a drawback to the composer?"

"Certainly, dear maestro; poetry—poetry such as Victor Hugo makes, such as Lamartine makes—has its own music within itself. It is not a sister of music, but a rival; it is not an ally, it is an adversary. Instead of contributing aid to the siren, the enchantress enters into conflict with her. It is the combat of Armide and the fairy Morgana. Music remains victorious, but her victory exhausts her."

"Then you will consent to write words to put to music?"

"To be sure. I who have written three hundred volumes and twenty-five dramas, would consent to that because it would flatter my pride to aid you, to serve you in any way, because I who hold a first place myself when I like would feel myself honored to yield it to you out of courtesy, you whom I love, you whom I admire, you who are my brother in art. I have my kingdom as you have yours. If Etéocles and Polynicius had each had a throne they would never have cut each other's throats, and prob-

ably would have died of old age, paying each other visits every New Year's Day."

"Marvelous! I'll hold you to your word."

"To make poetry to go with your music?"

"Yes."

"I give you my promise. Only tell me beforehand what sort of opera you would like."

"I would like a fantastic opera."

"You see plainly, my dear Berlioz, that there was sauerkraut at the bottom of it after all."

"A fantastic opera," replied I, "take care. Italy, with its pure air, is not the land of supernatural traditions; for phantoms, specters, apparitions are needed for the long, cold nights of the north, the fogs of England or the vapors of the Rhine. What would a poor ghost do astray in the midst of the ruins of Rome, on the shores of Naples, in the plains of Sicily? Where would it find a refuge if pursued by an exorcist? Not the least mist in which to wrap, nor a bit of fog in which to hide, not the smallest forest in which to seek an asylum; it would be tracked, collared, led into the light. People the night with dreams, then, when night is your day, when the moon is your sun, when you live, not from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock in the evening, but from eight o'clock in the evening to eight o'clock in the morning. While our dark evenings pass slowly by; when by the light of a smoky lamp we are shut up in our cellars, where the young girls whirl the distaff and the young men tell tales, you meanwhile are enjoying serenades, your streets being full of merry sounds and songs of love. Your apparition is a beautiful young girl, with black eyes and dark hair, who shows herself upon her balcony, lets fall a bouquet of roses and disappears. Oh, Juliet! Juliet! You arose from your tomb only because Shakespeare, the poet of the North, bid you to rise. And you obeyed the voice of that mighty enchanter, that nothing could resist, you lovely spring flower of Venice! But none of your compatriots would have thought of it before, nor would afterward have thought of giving you a like order. Take care, Rossini! take care!"

"I have let you talk, have I not?" said my host, smiling.

"Yes, and I beg your pardon for having abused the permission."

"No; speak on, speak always. There is my friend Louis Scamozza, who is a poet like you, who is listening to you, and will take it upon himself to reply to you."

I extended my hand to my young colleague.

"I am listening," said I to him.

"Do you know why the illustrious master refers you to me?" said Scamozza, smiling.

"Because he knows that I would take pleasure in hearing from you."

"No, it is not that. Because he knows that an event which happened to one of my ancestors protests energetically against what you have just said. Is it possible that an admirer of Dante should come and refuse to us that sublime poetry treating of the world beyond the tomb, of which the Florentine exile is the sole model, and of which Milton, the poet of the North, is only the feeble neophyte? Alas! we have a right to all manner of poetry, for we have had all sorts of misfortunes. Have you ever seen your gray sky irradiated by two shades more luminous than those of Francesca and Paolo? Have you ever seen issue from the grave a more terrible specter than that of Farinata degli Uberti? Have you ever stepped side by side with a sweeter spirit than that of the poet Sordello of Mantua? Ah! you doubt the spiritual side of Italy! Very well; let Rossini give you his score. I, for my part, will give you your poem."

"You?"

"Yes, I; did I not tell you that in my own family lived the memory of a mournful story?"

"Very well, tell it me."

"No; for everybody knows it here; but I repeat, let Rossini send you his score and I will send you my story."

"And when, pray?"

"To-morrow morning."

"All right," said Rossini. "To-night, before I lie down to rest, I'll write the overture."

Then lifting his glass.

"Here's success to the 'The Students of Bologna.'"

Each one testified his acquiescence by touching his neighbor's glass and expressing hearty good wishes.

Nothing was talked of but this beautiful project during the remainder of the meal.

At ten o'clock we arose from the table. Rossini seated himself at the piano and improvised the overture.

Unfortunately, he forgot to note it down.

The next day I received the story.

I have heard nothing more of the musical score.

Now for the story; here it is.

XIV.

THE OATH.

On December 1st, 1703, under the pontificate of Pope Clement XI., about four o'clock in the afternoon, three young men, whom it was easy to recognize as students belonging to the University of Bologna, left the city by the Florentine Gate, and wended their way toward that charming cemetery which at first sight presents rather the aspect of a gay promenade than a mortuary inclosure. All three walked with a rapid step, enveloped in great cloaks, and looking behind them like men who are afraid of being followed.

One of them hid something under his cloak, and it was easy to see that what he hid was a couple of swords.

Arrived at the wall of the cemetery, instead of going to the entrance, the three young men turned to the right, and went along the southern front; then arrived at the extremity of that wall, they turned abruptly to the left, and leaning against the eastern face, they found three other young men, two of whom were seated and one standing. These three young men seemed to be waiting for them.

On perceiving the last-comers, the two young men who were seated got up, and the one standing left the support of the wall. All three advanced to meet the party that had just come up.

These three were also covered up in their cloaks, and the edge of one of the cloaks was raised by the point of two swords.

Four of the young men continued to advance until they had met.

The other two stayed behind, each on his own side, in such a manner that when the four students had come together and formed a group, the two left solitary were each twenty paces from the group, and consequently forty paces one from each other.

The four young men conferred for a moment in the most animated manner, while of the two isolated young men who remained aloof from the conference, one dug a hole in the moist ground by pressing heavily upon his cane, while the other made the thistle-heads fly with his switch.

Two or three times the conference broke off, and each time the group in the middle separated to form a double group, of which, for the time being, the two isolated young men became the two principal personages.

Each time these could be seen making positive signs of refusal, equivalent to saying that they would not follow the advice of their companions nor abate an iota in their demands.

Finally the negotiations becoming tedious and appearing to offer no possible friendly solution, the young men who carried the swords drew them out from underneath their cloaks and yielded them to the investigation of their companions.

The swords were then examined in the most scrupulous manner. It was evident that they were discussing the greater or less gravity of the wounds as dependent upon the form of the weapon. Lastly, as they could not agree upon which sort to choose, they tossed a piece of money into the air, that the choice of swords might be the result of chance.

Chance having pronounced a verdict, the rejected swords were cast aside; they made a sign to the two isolated young men, who approached, politely exchanging a slight nod of recognition, and threw down their coats and vests.

Then the one planted his cane in the ground, while the other threw his switch on his clothes.

Both drew near to each other.

Then one of their companions presented to each one of them a sword by the handle, crossed the two points, and drawing back, pronounced the word "Go!"

Both attacked at the same instant, and their swords crossed up to the handle.

Both immediately took one step backward, and put themselves on guard.

The two were nearly of equal strength, but that was of inferior grade.

At the end of a few seconds the sword of one of the two disappeared almost entirely in the body of his adversary.

"Enough?" said he who had struck the blow, making a bound backward, and lowering his sword, still, however, standing on the defensive.

"No," said the other—"no."

"Yes."

And he who had last spoken regarded his sword-blade, which was moist and reddened two thirds of its length.

"It is nothing! it is nothing!" said the wounded man, taking one step forward, preparing to advance upon his enemy.

But at that movement a jet of blood gushed forth from his wound, the hand that held the sword was outstretched, and his sword fell to the ground. The wounded man coughed painfully, and wanted to spit, but had not the strength. Only bloody foam reddened his lips.

Two of the young men were medical students.

"Ah! the devil!" said they, on beholding those symptoms which indicated that the wound was a serious one.

In fact, almost immediately the one of the two combatants who had been struck dropped his head upon his breast, tottered, turned half-way around, beating the air with his arms, and fell, heaving a sigh.

The two medical students rushed forward and stooped over the body of their comrade, one of them having already opened his case of surgical instruments and holding his lancet ready to bleed the wounded man if necessary.

But the other, who had rolled up his sleeve, let the arm drop, saying:

"It is useless; he is dead!"

At that word the one who had remained standing turned frightfully pale, and looked as if he too were going to die. He threw down his sword and moved impulsively toward the body of his adversary; but the two seconds stopped him.

"Come! come!" said one of them; "it is a misfortune; but as it is irreparable, the thing to do is not to lament but to gain the frontier. Have you any money?"

"Seven or eight crowns perhaps."

Each one fumbled in his pocket.

"Hold! Take!" said four voices together, "and save yourself without losing a minute."

The young man resumed his vest, coat, and cloak.

And after having pressed the hand of some and em-

braced the others, according to the degree of his intimacy with them, he darted off in the direction of the Apennines, and soon disappeared amid the gathering shades of night.

The looks of the four young men had followed him until the moment of his disappearance.

"Now," said one of them, "and Antonio?"

All eyes were directed to the corpse.

"Antonio?"

"Yes; what are we going to do with him?"

"Carry him back to the city, of course. We shall not leave him there, I hope!"

"No, to be sure; but what shall we say?"

"That is very simple. Let us say that we were all four taking a walk outside the city walls, when suddenly we came upon Antonio and Ettore, who were fighting. We made haste to try and part them; but before we had got there Antonio had fallen dead and Ettore had taken to flight. Only let us say that he fled in the direction of Modena instead of saying that he took the road to the Apennines; the absence of Ettore will confirm what we say."

"Well!"

This version of the affair being adopted unanimously, they hid the second pair of swords in some brush-wood. They then rolled the dead man up in his cloak and bore him to the city.

At the gate of the city the young men made the affirmation agreed upon; they procured four porters, had Antonio placed upon a stretcher and conveyed to his lodgings.

For that matter, half the pain was spared the young men, because Antonio was a Venetian, and his family did not reside at Bologna. A letter would convey the sad news, and one of his friends, a Venetian himself, and acquainted with Antonio's family, was commissioned to write this letter.

This young man was one of the three whom we have seen go out through the Florentine Gate. His name was Beppo de Scamozza; the second was from Velletri, and his name was Gaetano Romanoli; the third was the one who had remained on the battle-field.

We have said all that we had to say of the deceased. Let us follow the living to the small chamber that they oc-

cupied in the third story of a house, the tenants of which made a business of taking student lodgers.

The clock of St. Dominique's Church struck seven of the evening as these two young men, throwing their cloaks upon the bed which was common to them, sat down facing each other on the two sides of a table upon which burned one of those lamps with three burners, which still in our day served for lighting up Italian houses, and which, at the period when these events took place, were far more common than they are to-day.

A single jet was burning, and cast an uncertain light abroad in the room.

Let us say a word about these two young men, upon whom will be concentrated the interest of the events that we are going to narrate.

One of them, as we have said, was named Beppo de Scamozza, and was a Venetian; the other, Gaetano Romanoli, and was a Roman.

Beppo had just completed his twenty-second year. He was the natural son of a great lord, who had settled upon him a small fortune of six or eight thousand livres a year, leaving him free and alone in life.

The other, on the contrary, belonged to a family of honest merchants, who, while they transacted a large business at Rome, owned a villa at Velletri. In this villa it was that Gaetano was born.

The different position of the two young men, in the midst of the world where chance had thrown them, had very much influenced the morale, and, I would almost say, the physique of each of them; the countenance modifies the face. And what is the countenance? The superficial expression of inward feelings. Suppose two children to have the same face at the moment of their birth, and cause these children to make the acquaintance of life, the one from its dark side, the other from its bright side, surrounded, the one by misfortunes, the other by delights, and at twenty-five years of age these two faces, which formerly had a similar expression, will now wear an entirely different expression.

Beppo, isolated, without family, brought up by strangers, was almost exiled in life. From his childhood he had eaten that bread with bitter salt of which Dante speaks. He was tall, slender, pale, melancholy; his hair,

that he wore long, as was the fashion of the period, fell in black curls over his shoulders. He preferred to the elegant apparel that his small fortune would have enabled him to wear, clothing of dark colors and without embroidery; it is true that their cut redeemed their simplicity, and that in the simplest attire Beppo de Scamozza ever looked the gentleman.

As to Gaetano Romanoli, he was a jolly student of twenty years, who was taking the law course with the intention of becoming an advocate, in order to leave to his sister Bettina, whom he adored, all the advantages that might accrue to her, when the time came for her to be established in life, by the surrender to her of their parents' mercantile establishment. Brought up in the bosom of his family, surrounded by all those thoughtful attentions of which Beppo's childhood and youth had been deprived, Gaetano had always known existence under its cheerful aspect, and smiled at the life that smiled at him. He was a handsome young man, with bronzed cheeks, that were full, however, of freshness and youth, with a Grecian nose, quick eye, and white teeth that disclosed a frank and friendly smile.

How had two characters so opposite as these become, as it were, soldered to each other? How had the friendship between the melancholy Beppo and the merry Gaetano become proverbial? How was it that they had only one room, one table, and, according to the old tradition of their comrades, only one bed? It was one of those mysteries of attraction which is only explained by that sympathy of contrasts which is much more common than people think, and often unites strength to weakness, sadness to joy, sweetness to violence.

The two young men sat for a moment lost in thought, one facing the other.

But the first one, raising his head:

"What are you thinking about?" asked Beppo.

"Alas!" answered Gaetano, "I am thinking of something terrible. It is that what has just happened to poor Antonio this evening might happen to one of us, and that we would be separated forever."

"That is strange," said Beppo. "I was having exactly the same thought."

"And," continued Gaetano, holding his hand out to his friend, "that my sweetest dream would be thereby destroyed."

"Of what dream are you speaking?"

"That hope of which I have talked to you many times, which is to make us more than two friends, which is to make of us two brothers."

"Oh, yes," said Beppo, sadly. "Bettina!"

"If you knew how pretty she is, Beppo! If you knew how she loves you—"

"Nonsense! How could she love me? She has never seen me?"

"Has she not seen you through my eyes? Does she not know you through my letters?"

Beppo shrugged his shoulders.

"Listen," said Gaetano. "I'll bet one thing."

"What is that?"

"She has never seen you, it is true."

"Well, what of it?"

"Well, I bet that if she should chance to meet you, she would recognize you."

"Come, then! Besides, what is the use of indulging in these fine fancies? You know very well that your father will never give Bettina to any but a merchant."

"You are much better than a merchant; you—you are a nobleman."

"A pretty nobleman, to be sure, with a bar sinister across his escutcheon," said Beppo, shaking his head. "No, my dear Gaetano, let us only indulge in dreams that may come true."

"What are they?"

"That of never being parted from each other, in the first place. Oh! make yourself easy; that will in nothing disturb the even tenor of your life while your friendship for me shall endure. I can follow you everywhere; I have no family, and am hardly certain that I have a country. What care the people with whom I live about the spot that I inhabit? If you cease to love me, if I become burdensome to you, you will tell me so; then our bodies shall be separated, since our hearts no longer beat in unison."

"Odds fish, man! What has put all these melancholy ideas into your mind?" cried Gaetano. "Friend, one

thing only will separate us, as you know, if you think like me."

"What?"

"Death."

"Well, if you think, like me, friend," said Beppo, "death even will not separate us."

"Explain yourself."

"Do you believe that some part of us survives our natural life?"

"Religion promises us this, and our hearts confirm it."

"Do you really believe in this immortality of the soul?"

"I do."

"Well, friend, we have only to bind ourselves by one of those oaths that pledges body and soul, and if one of us dies the body alone will have left the body, while the soul will remain faithful to its friendship—for that which loves in us is not the body, but the soul."

"Do you think that what you propose to me is not sacrilege?" asked Gaetano.

"I do not think that one offends God by trying to subtract from death the purest feeling of which man is capable—that is, friendship."

"Well, be it so," said Gaetano, holding out his hand to his friend. "In this world and the other, Beppo."

"Wait!" said the latter.

He got up, went for a crucifix suspended over the head of the bed, and set it up on the table.

Then he laid his hand upon the sacred image.

"By the blood of our Lord," said he, "I swear to my friend, Gaetano Romanoli, that if I die first, in whatever place my body may fall, my breath forsake me and my mortal existence cease, my soul will revisit him and tell him all that it is permitted me to tell of that great mystery that they call death. And this oath," added Beppo, looking upward with a glance of full faith and piety, "this oath I take in the conviction that it wounds in nothing the dogmas of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion, in which I was born, and in which I hope to die."

Gaetano, in his turn, laid his hand upon the crucifix, repeating the same oath in the same words.

At the very moment in which he pronounced the last word of the oath formulated by Beppo, there was a knock at the door.

The two young men embraced and then both together said:

"Come in!"

XV.

THE TWO STUDENTS OF BOLOGNA.

A MAN entered, holding a letter in his hand.

This man was the servant of the director of the post-office.

The courier arrived from Rome in the evening, and ordinarily letters were not received until morning. But the post-master, as he was placing letters beforehand in the different boxes, where they were to wait until called for by the persons for whom they were destined, had observed one addressed to himself. He had opened it, and inclosed in this letter he had found another one, which he was requested to forward without delay to Gaetano Romanoli, student at Bologna.

The young man was known to the post-master, who made haste to have delivered to him a missive that seemed so urgent.

Gaetano took it from the hands of the messenger, to whom he gave a piece of money; then, with tottering step, he drew near the lamp.

"What is the matter?" asked Beppo. "You look pale."

"A letter from my sister," murmured Gaetano, wiping away the moisture that had gathered upon his brow.

"Well! Is that any reason for trembling and turning pale?"

"Some misfortune has come to our family," said Gaetano.

"How do you know that?"

"I know Bettina so well," said Gaetano, "that I can guess from simply looking at the handwriting under the impression of what she writes. I have no need to open her letter in order to learn whether she is sad, cheerful, or calm. The address tells me everything."

"And this time the address tells you?" resumed Beppo, casting an uneasy look upon the letter.

"This time the address tells me that Bettina has written

to me while weeping. Stop! Do you see the two first letters of our family name—a sob interrupted them."

"Oh! you are mistaken," said Beppo.

"Read yourself," answered Gaetano, giving the letter to his friend, sitting down and with a sigh burying his head in his hands.

Beppo opened the letter; but at the first lines his hand trembled and his eyes fell sadly upon Gaetano.

It was easy to see that he was weeping convulsively.

"Courage, friend," said Beppo in a sweet voice, laying his hand on his companion's shoulder.

Gaetano raised his head. Tears were flowing down his cheeks.

"I have some," said he. "What has happened? Speak!"

"Your father is very ill, and desires to see you before he dies."

"He is not dead, then?" exclaimed Gaetano, with a flash of joy.

"No."

"Are you not mistaken?"

"You had better read for yourself."

Gaetano took the letter and read.

"When do we set out?" said Beppo.

"You ask when I am to set out, for you are to stay."

"Why should I stay if you depart?"

"Because in three days you are to pass your examination for a doctorate, because the thesis is printed, because the presents are sent to the professors."

"Well, we shall postpone all that until our return."

"No; for if it please God you shall not return, Beppo."

"So you want me to let you go by yourself?"

"As soon as your thesis has passed you must come and join me. If we are so happy as to save my poor father, you will help us to nurse him, and by the time he is well he will look upon you as one of the family; if he dies, you are already one of us. Look! does not Bettina say at the close of her letter: 'Remember me most kindly to our dear brother Beppo.'"

"I'll do as you wish, Gaetano. You had better reflect well, though."

"My reflections are made. As for me, I set out this evening, this very minute. As for you, you are to start in

three days; but come now and help me to find a conveyance, that we may be together as long as possible."

"Come!" said Beppo.

Gaetano threw some linen and a coat into the satchel, took all the money that he had, thrust his pistols into his pockets, and, furnished with his student's card for a passport, went out to look up a carriage.

The young man found what he was looking for at the post-office building. Gaetano was to leave the chaise with the master of the post-house at Rome, who was a relation of the one at Bologna.

At the end of ten minutes the horses were harnessed.

On seeing his friend get into the carriage, Beppo again insisted upon accompanying him; but Gaetano was inexorable. He again objected on account of the thesis, repeating ten times to Beppo that it was a separation of three days, that was all, since on the third evening he would set out himself.

Beppo yielded.

The chaise began to move, the postilion cracked his whip, the horses set off, and the two friends exchanged one more farewell.

Beppo waited until the chaise had disappeared; and when the noise of the wheels had died away, which seemed to prolong the presence of Gaetano near him, he heaved a sigh, and went back home with arms hanging and head bowed down.

We shall not attempt to describe the sensation of sadness which took possession of Beppo on re-entering that solitary chamber, where everything reminded of the recent presence of the friend who had just left it.

He seated himself at that table near which was still the vacant chair upon which Gaetano had been seated an hour before; then having resolved not to lie down, he got his books, with pen and ink, and set to work.

But a strange thing happened while he was working. His lamp went out three times, not suddenly, not by accident, but of itself, like a mouth ceasing to breathe or a soul making its escape.

Three times Beppo rekindled it, each time convincing himself that it had not gone out for want of oil—for at daylight the receptacle was still half full.

Beppo was superstitious, as are all melancholy souls.

His regret at having failed to attend Gaetano became almost remorse, his sadness almost despair.

Moreover, by a strange coincidence, each of the three times that the lamp had gone out it was while Beppo was engaged in writing to the parents of Antonio, as upon him devolved the duty of imparting to them the sad news of his untimely end.

Day dawned without Beppo having lain down to rest. He had counted upon daylight dispelling his gloomy imaginations; but the day itself was as mournful as a winter day, and although the young man tried to study, study could not for a moment dispel the haunting idea that Gaetano was running into some danger.

Indeed, the way is long from Bologna to Rome, and even now is not particularly safe for travelers who ride post by night, still less so at the period when took place the events that we are narrating. Whatever diligence Gaetano used, his friend could hardly hope that he would make the trip from Bologna to Rome in less than sixty hours, and as he had set out in the evening, and was not to stop under any pretext, as Beppo knew, this meant three nights of dangers to be encountered.

The day passed in much sadness, and ended more sadly yet. The burial of Antonio was fixed for that evening. It took place by torch-light, as is customary in Italy, and all the University of Bologna, save his murderer and Gaetano, followed in the funeral procession.

Toward eleven o'clock Beppo returned to his room, so weary that he did not even try to struggle against sleep, and having thrown himself on the bed, he almost immediately sunk into a profound slumber.

But hardly had his lamp been put out, hardly were his eyes closed and his thought had lost its clearness, before Beppo uttered a cry, jumped out of bed, and, groping, felt for his sword.

St. Dominique's church clock struck eleven.

And yet, after a moment's reflection, Beppo lighted up his lamp again, and pale and thoughtful, seated himself upon his bed, but without laying down his sword.

He had just dreamed that Gaetano, stopped at the turn of a road, was struggling in the midst of a dozen men with sinister looks. He seemed to hear the firing off of both his

pistols, and fully awake as he now was, a voice still sounded in his ear which called for help.

However, after a few moments of reflection, reason got the better of this terror, for which there was no warrant, so he lay down and fell asleep again.

But his dream continued like an action begun and going on to completion.

He saw Gaetano stretched on the side of the road with a wound in his heart.

Then finally, in the midst of a solitary landscape, amid mountains covered with snow, a freshly covered-up ditch, the black indenture of which alone soiled the white mantle of winter.

When Beppo awoke after this third dream, day had come.

This was the day on which he was to undergo his examination; but instead of performing the duty allotted to it, the young man got up, put on his traveling suit, in his turn took up his weapons and purse, buying the strongest horse that he could find, and set forth to join Gaetano, or at least to get news of him. He was determined to travel night and day, following the same route that he had taken. When his horse could bear him no longer, he would buy or hire another one.

In virtue of this resolution, he journeyed from seven o'clock in the morning until ten at night, with no other interruption than a half hour's halt at Lojono. In the afternoon he would have much liked to continue his journey, but his horse refused to stir. He had gone a distance of fifty miles, and positively required a few hours of rest.

Beppo, then, was compelled to come to a halt, as we have said, at ten o'clock in the evening at Monte-Carelli, a little village situated in the heart of the Apennines.

He stopped at a small inn ordinarily patronized by none but muleteers. And after having given all the care necessary for the well-being of his horse, with which he concerned himself first of all, he thought of himself and asked for supper.

This room apart was a low-pitched hall, dimly lighted by a mean lamp, into which an old woman had ushered Beppo, while in his presence a meal was prepared for him, which was to be confined to two cutlets and an omelet with sausage.

While all these preliminaries were being settled, the anxious young man was pacing up and down the floor, his sword striking against his legs. Finally the two expected dishes were served. The old woman finished her work by putting a glass and bottle on the table, then asked Beppo if he wanted anything, and upon receiving a negative answer, went out, leaving the traveler alone to discuss his meal.

Beppo was in haste to get through with this meager collation, during which he hoped strongly that his horse, which, for his part, stood before a crib heaped high with hay, would recover strength to continue his journey. He took off his sword, then placed it upon a chest, and went to take his seat.

But hardly had he taken his place, when, on the other side of the table, facing him, without knowing how he had entered, nor how he had come there, he saw Gaetano seated with crossed arms, who smiled upon him sadly, at the same time shaking his head.

Although this was not the expression which usually lighted up the countenance of his friend, Beppo recognized him and uttered a cry of joy.

"Ah! it is you, then, dear Gaetano!" exclaimed he, rising to embrace him.

But he caught only air. His open arms met together again without having touched anything. Three times the apparition escaped, as a vapor, from the embraces of the afflicted young man. And yet the specter remained visible, and always seated in the same place.

Beppo began to understand that he had to do with a spirit, but as it was that of the man that he loved most in the world, he was not frightened, and began to question it.

Not only did he receive no answer, but by degrees the vision paled, melted away, and disappeared.

This time the vision came to confirm the impression of the dream. Beppo could no longer think of anything but Gaetano. Some grave accident must have happened to his friend for God to send him this double warning.

He called his hostess, paid for the supper which he had not eaten, and, going to the stable, saddled his horse and departed.

It really seemed as though some supernatural power sustained the steed as well as his rider. Beppo kept on his

way all the rest of the night, the whole of the next day, and in the evening, after three halts skillfully managed to suit the needs of his beast, he reached Assisa at seven o'clock.

There, however much Beppo might desire to continue his course, he was compelled to pause. His horse could not put one foot before the other.

He himself had need of repose. For one night and two days he had been going on almost without cessation. He asked for a room and went to bed without supper.

Nevertheless, however great was the pressure upon Beppo of fatigue, trouble of mind was yet greater. The result was that although he had lain down to rest, and put out his lamp, he could not go to sleep.

The window of his chamber had neither curtains nor blinds; the light of the moon penetrated through the glass so much the more brightly as it was increased by the reflection of the snow that Beppo had found some leagues on the other side of Assisa. Beppo then was leaning upon his elbow in bed, with his eyes fixed upon that ray of pale light which illumined his chamber, when suddenly he heard a step on the staircase, that creaked. That step approached his door. The door opened. Beppo seized one of the pistols lying on the candle-stand at the head of his bed, and aimed it at the door.

But upon the threshold appeared a young man wrapped in a brown cloak all powdered with snow. The young man advanced toward the bed, threw back the cloak that covered a portion of his face, and Beppo recognized his friend.

Beppo threw down his pistol, uttered a cry, and would have jumped out of bed, but Gaetano made a sign to him with his hand at once sad and imperative.

Beppo remained speechless, breathless, motionless, his eyes frightfully dilated in that night pale as an aurora borealis.

As for Beppo, it was evident that it was the same vision that had appeared to him at Monte-Carelli.

The specter first took off its cloak, then its clothes, signing to Beppo to give him the usual place in his bed.

Then it lay down near him.

Beppo was altogether so much moved and frightened that he kept perfectly still, close to the edge of the bed,

supporting himself on one hand, and gazing upon his friend.

Then, after an instant:

"Gaetano," said he in a low tone, "is it you? Speak; answer!"

Gaetano kept silence.

"If God," continued Beppo, "allows the ordinary laws of nature to be disturbed, God has a purpose. Tell me what you will, friend, and, by our friendship in this world, I will do it."

Gaetano made no reply.

"Are you dead?" continued Beppo, "and have you come back, by virtue of the oath that we made not to leave each other, even after our death? In that case, friend, see, I do not shrink from you."

As he said these words, Beppo turned to his friend with open arms, but uttered a cry, for it seemed to him that he was touching a statue of ice.

Something like a mortal chill had just been communicated to the body of the living.

As to the dead, with the same sad smile upon his lips which Beppo had already remarked, he got up, put on his garments one after the other, and left the room, keeping his head constantly turned toward his friend, and waving him a farewell with his hand.

At the moment that Gaetano crossed the threshold of the door, Beppo thought that he heard him breathe a long sigh.

Then the sound of steps upon the staircase died away with a diminution like to that which they had made in coming.

"Oh!" murmured the young man, falling back upon his pillow, "Gaetano is dead! really dead!"

Whether he swooned or fell into the deep sleep of exhaustion, Beppo did not awake until day-break. A whole night had sufficed his horse for rest; he was fresh and ready for the road. Beppo then mounted him and proceeded without delay.

So far, at every relay station he had carefully inquired if, twenty-four hours before, a young man of from twenty to twenty-one years, alone in a carriage, going from Bologna to Rome, had not supplied himself with fresh horses there.

Until now he had had positive information with regard

to Gaetano. At Foligno and Spoletti the same answer; everywhere they had observed the young man traveling with his student's card; he was in good health, and appeared to be in great haste to reach home.

However, because of the snow, the road, already bad during summer, had become almost impracticable. The result of it was that all Beppo was able to accomplish in this day was to gain Terni. At Strettura—that is to say, two leagues on this side of Terni—the traveler had put his usual question, and found that there too Gaetano had been seen.

It was five o'clock in the evening when Beppo arrived at Strettura. And when, after receiving the assurance that his friend had passed this way, and learning that he had kept on his way to Terni, he prepared to do the same; but the post-master, to whom he addressed himself, shook his head and advised him not to go any further; the road, shut in between two chains of the Apennines, was infested by a troop of bandits, and each day the report was brought in of some terrible exploit performed by these wretches.

But Beppo had never feared the living, and the idea that it was the specter of Gaetano which had appeared to him had given to him supernatural strength; he declared then that he too was in great haste to reach Rome, and that he knew of no dangers capable of stopping him in his course.

Consequently, he reloaded his pistols, saw to it that his sword did not stick to the scabbard, spurred his horse to the top of his speed, and plunged into the valley that leads from Strettura to Terni.

Indeed, no locality was more favorable for an ambush. Clumps of trees, as tangled as Corsican thickets, lined the road-sides; enormous blocks of granite had become detached from the mountain and rolled to the edge of the road. This desolate pathway reminded one of that which Dante speaks that crosses chaos and leads to hell.

Every minute Beppo was expecting to be attacked; but indifferent to his own fate, he encountreed with a cool, calm eye every manifestation that seemed to threaten a surprise. On approaching the spot where danger threatened, Beppo stooped over the holster of the saddle where he kept his pistols. The spot traversed without accident, he drew himself up with that smile which bespeaks contempt for a danger overcome.

At last he perceived the city lights, and went straight to the post station and put his habitual question.

But here ceased the information hitherto supplied him unfailingly; not only could they give him no news of Gaetano, but said, moreover, that for nearly fifteen days no kind of post-chaise had passed from Terni; the report of the ravages committed by that band of robbers concerning which Beppo had heard talk at Strettura was causing all reasonable travelers to turn back and take the Aquapendente route.

Thus Gaetano, having come as far as Strettura, had not been seen at Terni. All trace of him disappeared on the road that leads from the first to the second of these two cities.

Beppo had remarked, outside of Terni, on the road that he had just followed, an inn that seemed a forlorn sentinel upon this accursed road. He thought that this inn, bringing him near to the spot where, according to all probability Gaetano had been stopped, he would more surely be able to obtain news of him in this isolated inn than in the city.

Consequently, he turned around and entered that inn, which had for its sign: "To the Cascade of Terni."

A post-chaise was drawn up in a corner of the courtyard. He thought that he recognized it, and immediately made inquiries; but he learned that it belonged to a young lady from Rome, who was going to meet her brother or her husband, and who had put up there two hours before, upon being informed of the danger into which she would run if she attempted to cross such a defile by night.

There Beppo again inquired after his friend; but although he applied to every one in the hotel, from the master of the house to the stable-boy, he could not hear a word about him.

Beppo both dreaded and longed for the moment when he should find himself once more alone. The two apparitions which had revealed themselves to him successively on two nights, one at Monte-Carelli, the other at Assisa, had taken complete hold of his mind; he was persuaded that this night would not pass without his once more seeing Gaetano.

He eat a bite in the common hall, his aim being to listen to the conversation going on, in the constant hope of learning something about Gaetano; but although little else than

the doings of robbers was talked of, no detail seemed to fit the particular case that alone interested the traveler.

Then he withdrew to his chamber. There were his last fear and his last hope. Human means were failing him; undoubtedly supernatural resources were going to come to his help.

Beppo did nothing to provoke a new apparition nor to defend himself against it. He undressed, lay down, put out his lamp, and went to sleep, committing to God the care of his body and soul.

At eleven o'clock he awoke with a bound. A few minutes elapsed, during which were being dissipated from his mind those light clouds that momentarily follow after sleep; then he heard the same noise that he had heard the night before at Assisa—that is to say, the sounding of a footfall causing the stairs to creak. That step, as on the night before, drew near his chamber, opened the door, and Gaetano appeared.

Beppo thought that, as he had done the night before, the specter was going to undress and lie down by him. He experienced a sad gratification in this nearness to a dead friend, and was already drawing back so as to yield him his place, when the specter signed to him to rise.

Whether he had not understood, or whether he hesitated, Beppo did not immediately obey.

Then Gaetano drew aside his cloak, that was covered with snow. As on the night before, he was naked under the cloak, and in his breast was a bloody wound, that he pointed at with his finger. Beppo, in desperation, comprehended the whole import, jumped out of bed and dressed as fast as he could.

Standing motionless at the foot of the bed, the specter waited for him.

When Beppo was ready:

"Here I am," said he. "What would you have me do?"

Without making any reply, Gaetano made him a sign to arm himself.

Beppo buckled on his sword and stuck his two pistols in the belt.

"Is this right?" asked Beppo.

The specter nodded approval, and while he kept his eyes on his friend, to see if he were following, he led the way to

the door, smiling sadly as if to encourage Beppo not to be afraid of him.

They thus left the inn, all its doors opening before them, or, rather, the specter clearing a way wherever he passed that served for both himself and his companion at the same time, and which closed again behind them.

After having followed the road for almost a quarter of an hour, the specter took a blind path leading through undergrowth and over stones. Beppo came behind him, sword in hand, remarking with terror that the steps of the phantom made no prints upon the snow, but instead, that his blood left a long track behind him. Two or three times, indulging the hope that his friend would respond to his questions, Beppo addressed to him a few words of affection; but every time, as if he was afraid that the sound of these words might betray the presence of a living mortal, Gaetano carried his finger to his lips, motioning Beppo to be silent.

For that matter, this warning soon became superfluous, for in proportion as their path became more mountainous, they approached the cascade, and the roar of the water-fall was such that two persons could not have heard each other talk, no matter how near they were together nor how loudly they had spoken.

But one thing struck Beppo more than aught else—that is, the further they went, the more clearly he recognized the landscape that he had seen in his dream. Finally that landscape was completed by the aspect of the newly covered-up ditch that drew a dark line along the vast mantle of snow with which the earth was covered.

Beppo had no more need of explanation. The specter of Gaetano had led him to the spot where he had been buried. He fell on his knees before the funeral mound, praying for his friend. Meanwhile, the specter had remained standing, and it seemed to Beppo that he joined with him in that prayer.

This pious duty having been performed, Beppo extended his sword over the tomb of his friend, and swore to avenge his death. Then, having cut with his sword two branches from an oak-tree, he fastened them together in the form of a cross, and planted that cross upon the ditch.

By the aid of this trail of blood and that cross he could not fail to recognize the tomb and the road leading to it.

Undoubtedly at that moment the specter judged that Beppo had done all that was to be done, for not disturbing himself about the route pursued, he took another across the rocks, looking to see if Beppo continued to follow him.

The young man, who felt himself impelled by a supernatural force, followed the specter in order to interrogate him as to what he was to do. The specter had disappeared.

A moment afterward he heard a sound of steps and voices coming from the direction opposite to that which he had pursued.

Beppo retired from the road and hid himself behind a rock. There he waited, to learn who the persons were who thus imperiled their lives by being in such a place at night.

As the party gradually drew near, he seemed to distinguish the voice of a woman.

He was not mistaken. In the middle of a group of five persons who were following the path that he had just quitted, and which led in the direction of Gaetano's tomb, was a woman.

The other persons were: a sort of *facchino* bearing a torch, a man clothed in the manner of the mountaineers about Rome, and two other men who looked like domestics.

The woman was a young girl hardly nineteen years of age, dressed all in black; a strange air of resolution sat upon her face, and she held a pistol in her hand.

The two lackeys who seemed to be her suite were each armed with a bludgeon and two pistols.

Neither the mountaineer nor the guide was armed.

Arrived within a few steps of the spot where Beppo was concealed, the little company stood still.

The young woman refused to go further.

"Wretch!" said she, addressing herself to the peasant, who seemed to serve as a guide for the little company, "I consented to follow you, for you promised to lead me to the spot where my brother was. See, we have been walking for two hours. Where is he?"

"Have patience, signorina," replied the man; "we'll get there."

And he looked around him like a man in search of a means for escape.

"Remember what I have told you," resumed the young

girl in a firm tone, and raising her pistol to a level with the young man's breast: "if you try to escape, you are a dead man!"

"Oh! I want nothing of that sort, signorina."

And his uneasy movements belied his words.

"If he takes one step backward," said the young girl, addressing herself to the two lackeys, "shoot him."

"But where are they? Where are they then?" murmured the man in despair.

"Yes, your accomplices fail you," said the young girl. "Listen: it is not if you try to escape now that you are a dead man, it is if you do not answer. You came from Rome, you brought me this letter from my brother; he was a prisoner. The banditti had fixed his ransom at twenty thousand crowns. Ten thousand have been handed over to you; after a delay of three days ten thousand were to be brought to you by a person who could not inspire your companions with fear, and to that person my brother was to be delivered safe and sound. That person is myself. Here are the ten thousand crowns. Where is my brother?"

At these last words a light flashed upon Beppo, and he understood it all. He therefore left his place of concealment and walked straight up to the group.

The young girl thought that the robbers were at hand; but without seeming to experience the least alarm, she made a threatening gesture against the supposed bandit.

But Beppo held out his hand.

"You are Bettina Romanoli, sister of Gaetano Romanoli, are you not?" said he.

"Yes," replied the young girl. Then looking at him with attention: "And you," said she, "you are Beppo de Scamozza."

"Alas! yes, madame, and I have just come from Bologna, hoping to arrive in time to bring succor to my friend."

"And I from Rome with the rest of the sum exacted by the brigands who carried him off. This man, who had conveyed to them the first part, was to await me at the Hôtel di Porta Rossa and receive the second; but before handing it to him, I have required that my brother should be restored to me. Then he offered to guide me to the place where Gaetano was awaiting my arrival. I consented to it on condition that I should be accompanied by these

two faithful servants. For the past two hours we have been scouring the mountain. Finally I have just stopped, convinced that this man was betraying us."

"That is well. Watch this man more scrupulously than ever," said Beppo to the two servants.

Then turning toward Bettina:

"It is for me to act as your guide now," said he. "Do you trust me?"

"Are you not my brother's best friend?" said Bettina, holding out her hand to Beppo.

"Let us move on," said he.

Beppo again struck into the path that he had just followed, and guided Bettina to the freshly made grave. Then pointing it out to her, he said:

"Bettina, sister, summon up all your courage; there lies our brother Gaetano."

Bettina uttered a cry and fell upon her knees.

The man profited by this movement to try and effect his escape; but he was too well guarded by the two servants for this attempt to have any prospect of success.

Both at the same time aimed their pistols at him, threatening to shoot him dead.

At this moment Beppo shuddered, for Gaetano's ghost had just reappeared.

It was ten steps from the ditch, and made Beppo a sign to follow.

Beppo bowed in token of obedience.

Then addressing himself to the two servants:

"Guard that man," said he. "I'll soon be back."

And he followed the specter, that moved off in the direction of the cascade.

At the end of five minutes both followed a path so near to the cascade that they were well sprinkled by its spray.

In five minutes more they had attained the summit of the mountain, there where the river which forms the cascade rolls rapidly and boisterously incased in a sort of canal from twelve to fifteen feet broad.

That torrent is impassable by swimming. Whoever should venture into it would be swept away by the current, hurled forward like an arrow, and precipitated five hundred feet below.

It isolates a part of the mountain. Cut perpendicularly

on all sides, it can only be reached by a bridge thrown over the seething abyss.

The specter stopped in front of the bridge. It was composed of the trunks of three pine-trees. It had required the united strength of twenty men to bring each of these pine-trees from the top of the mountain and to lay them across the torrent.

Beppo sought to read in the eyes of the specter the purpose for which he had brought him there.

The specter made Beppo climb to the highest peak of the mountain, and thence he pointed out to him the dark mouth of a cavern lying five or six hundred yards from the other side of the torrent.

From time to time the mouth of this cavern was lighted up; then rising above the roar of the cascade issued from it drunken shouts and peals of laughter.

In this cavern the bandits who had killed Gaetano had sought an asylum for the night.

Beppo did not comprehend the design which the specter had had in bringing him to the spot where he was; for according to all probability, before he should have returned from Terni, bringing with him a body of men able to overcome the robbers, it would be day and the bandits have changed their retreat.

Gaetano guessed what was passing in the mind of his friend and shook his head.

"Speak!" asked Beppo. "Am I to go alone and attack them by your order? I shall obey without hesitation or fear."

Again Gaetano shook his head, came down from the peak, and moved toward the torrent.

Arrived at the bridge, he signed to Beppo to lift up the pines and throw them into the river.

"But," said Beppo, "it would take twenty men of my strength to accomplish such a task; for a single man it is impossible."

The specter made a sign which signified "Try."

Beppo stooped. These words of the Gospel just occurred to him:

"Believe, and by faith thou shalt lift mountains."

He firmly believed, bent forward, seized one of the pine logs by its end, raised it, and without more difficulty than an ordinary joist would have cost him, he let the pine drop

into the river, which bore it off as if it had been a blade of grass.

He did the same with the second, then with the third.

Then he listened.

And successively, like three cannon-shots, he heard, above the sound of the cascade the noise of the fall of the three giants.

The bridge was destroyed; the bandits were prisoners.

Perhaps in the midst of their orgy they too had heard that dull and threatening sound; but undoubtedly they took it for some one of those accidental noises that during the night season awaken the echo of the mountains.

Then Gaetano resumed the path by which they had come, the same that led back to the grave. At the end of ten minutes, Beppo, who was walking behind him, caught sight of the little party in exactly the same spot in which he had left them.

The torch of the *facchino* cast its light upon Bettina, who was still engaged in prayer, and the two domestics were still guarding the robber.

Beppo turned toward the specter, to learn of it what he was to do; but without doubt the supernatural work was accomplished. Gaetano gave a gesture of farewell, and opened his arms as if to appeal to his friend. Beppo rushed into his open arms, but the specter eluded him like a vapor, heaved a sigh, and vanished.

Then Beppo sadly descended the path until he came up to Bettina.

"Madame," said he to her, "you know all now, do you not? Let us go back to Terni, and to-morrow we shall have the body of our unhappy friend exhumed that we may pay it the last honors."

"But," asked the young girl, "is it enough for the consolation of his spirit that his body will rest in consecrated soil? Must we not also think of avenging his murder?"

"Vengeance is already accomplished, madame," said Beppo.

And he related what he had just done.

"But that is impossible," exclaimed the robber, who had listened to this recital with the terror of a condemned man. "It would take twenty men to lift each one of those pines that form the bridge."

"God helped me," replied Beppo, simply.

And taking again the road indicated by the track of blood that Gaetano had left upon the snow, and that he alone saw, he led the little company back to the Hôtel di Porta Rossa.

There the robber, being handed over to the hands of justice, confessed that the moment he returned with the first ten thousand crowns a quarrel had arisen among the bandits as to the partition of that sum. Then one of these wretches, finding himself less well endowed than the others, had stabbed Gaetano, in order to deprive the captain of the second part of the sum.

It was then, so as not to lose the second part, that the bandit had offered to guide the young girl to the place, where, believing that she would meet her brother, she would fall into an ambuscade by which her life and money would both be lost. But Bettina's courage and the menacing attitude of the two servants had changed the course of the drama. The bandit, feeling that death would be the immediate forfeit to pay for his treason, instead of going to rejoin his companions in the cavern, had wandered about a part of the night, always hoping to find an opportunity for escape.

The sudden appearance of Beppo had deprived him of this last hope.

The next day the disinterment of Gaetano's body had taken place in presence of the clergy of Terni and a body of soldiers.

The corpse had in the breast that broad and deep wound which the specter had shown to Beppo.

As to the bandits, as it was known that they had no means of escape but by the pine-tree bridge, and that bridge was destroyed, no attempt even was made to capture them. The ground was covered with snow and offered them no resource. It is supposed that they died of starvation.

The bodies of three of them, who had tried to swim across the torrent, were found battered and bruised upon the rocks of the cascade.

As to the body of Gaetano, it was conveyed to Rome, escorted by Bettina, Beppo, and the two faithful servants.

One year afterward, in fulfillment of Gaetano's wish, Beppo became the husband of Bettina.

XVI.

THE GENTLEMEN OF THE SIERRA-MORENA.

WHAT attracted me when I began this book, which had no precedent in the twenty years of my literary life that have already expired, was, above everything, the opportunity that it afforded me of diving into the inner life, worn out as I often am with actual life.

When I write a novel, or compose a drama, I naturally submit to the exigencies of the age in which my scene is laid. Places, men, events, are imposed upon me by the inexorable exactness of topography, genealogy, and dates; the language, costume, and manners even of my characters must be in harmony with the ideas that one has conceived of the epoch that I am trying to depict. My imagination clashing with reality, like a man who visits the ruins of a destroyed monument, is forced to stride over fallen columns, to follow corridors, and stoop beneath postern doors in order to find again, or nearly so, the plan of the edifice at the period when life dwelt there, when joy filled it with songs and laughter, or grief demanded of it an echo for sobs and lamentations. Amid all these researches, these investigations and necessities, the *ego* disappears; I become an individual made up of Froissart, Monstrelet, Chastelain, Commynes, Saulx-Tavannes, Montluc, Estoile, Tallemant des Reaux, and St. Simon; what talent I have is substituted for what individuality I may possess; learning for fervor of imagination; I cease to be an actor in the great romance of my own life, in that grand drama of my own sensations; I become a chronicler, annalist, or historian; I teach to my contemporaries the events of days gone by, the impressions that these events have produced upon the personages who have really lived, or whom I have created with my fancy. But of the impressions made by every-day events, those terrible events of the earth beneath our feet, which darken the sky overhead, of the impressions that these events have made upon me, I am prohibited from saying anything at all. Of the friendships of Edward III., the hatreds of Louis XI., the caprices of Charles IX., the passions of Henry IV., the weaknesses of Louis XIII., the love affairs of Louis XIV., I tell everything; but of the

friendships that comfort my heart, the hatreds that imbitter my mind, the caprices that have their origin in my own imagination; of my own passions, weaknesses, and love affairs, I dare not speak. I make my reader acquainted with a hero who has existed a thousand years ago, and I, the author, remain unknown to him. I make him love or hate at pleasure the persons for whom I choose to evoke his love or hatred, and yet to myself personally he remains indifferent. Well, there is something sad about this, something unjust against which I want to struggle. I will try to be more to the reader than a mere narrator of whom each one makes a picture to suit himself in the mirror of his fancy. I should like to become a live, palpable being, mingling in the life whose hours I take up, something like a friend; in short, so familiar to every one that when he enters, wheresoever it may be, in the cottage as well as the castle, there will be no need to introduce him to any one, because upon first sight he is recognized by all.

Thus it seems to me, I should die less; the tomb would accept me as dead, but my books would keep me alive. In a hundred, two hundred, in a thousand years, when manners, customs, languages, races even, when all shall have changed, with one of my volumes that, perchance, shall have survived, I myself shall survive like one of those shipwrecked mariners who is found upon a plank in the middle of the ocean, which has swallowed up the ship that carried him together with the other passengers.

Alas! all these reflections came to me in connection with a date. I had begun this chapter with these words:

"On November 3d, 1846, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I entered Cordova with my son and my dear good traveling companions, Maquet, Giraud, Boulanger, and Desbarolles."

And I added: "We came from Madrid, where we had parted from the Duke of Montpensier, and we were going to Algiers, where we were expected by Marshal Bugeaud."

I wrote these lines at ten o'clock this morning—that is, June 10th, 1849. My door opened, and some one came in and said to me:

"Marshal Bugeaud is dead!"

Hardly three years have passed away, and lo! he whom we left behind is exiled, and he whom we were going to join is dead.

Ah, well! Is it not quite natural, I ask my readers, that to-day, instead of creating for them some new or unknown personage, and that by forcing my mind, and constraining my heart, I should speak to them of what is in and not outside of me, and that I should converse a little with them about that charming youth—for when he left us he was hardly a man—and yet he said to me, while he offered me his hand, after the death of his elder brother:

"One having been taken away, the other is left."

And of that old soldier of Austerlitz, Tarragon, Conflans, Tortose, Castille, Orval, Tafna, Sikkah, and Isly, who, like Cincinnatus, had taken for his device, "With sword and plow."

When the Duke of Orleans died in a manner so fatal and unexpected, my first feeling was not to curse chance but to question God.

Often it is at the moment when God seems to withdraw His hand from the affairs of earth that, ever mindful of our globe, He impresses upon it some one of those decisive movements that change the face of society.

It is not without design that a prince who has made himself the darling of a people, who bears in his hand the fortunes of France, and molds into his thought the future of the world, goes out one morning alone in an open carriage, is run off with by two horses, his head being dashed against the paving-stones with such force that death ensues, the animals stopping of themselves a hundred yards beyond the spot where they had killed him.

I wrote at the same time: "If Providence had not had in view the good of humanity in general by permitting the death of the Duke of Orleans, Providence would have committed a crime; and how ally those two words 'crime' and 'Providence.'"

No, Providence had decreed that monarchies should draw toward their end. Already it had been written on the bronze book of destiny the date of the coming republic, which I had predicted to the king himself in 1832. Well, Providence found an obstacle in the way of its designs; it was the popularity of the soldier-prince, the poet-prince, the artist-prince. Providence overthrew the obstacle, so that, the time being ripe, nothing but a void was found between the throne which was crumbling away and the republic about to be born.

Well, it is my profound conviction that it was just so with regard to the eminent man who has recently died, the fiat having gone forth from Him who rules over individuals, nations, and worlds. Marshal Bugeaud was an obstacle in the way of the nascent republic. God struck by a blow equally unexpected the man of resistance and the prince of progress, and both are dead, one carrying away with him the future, the other the past.

I had not seen the marshal since our trip to Algiers, when, eight days ago, I met him at the mansion of the president, upon whom I had been so slow in paying this first call that it required nothing less than the memories of the Château de Ham to procure my pardon for having been so oblivious of the palace of L'Elysée.

The marshal arrived at Paris. He was too far off down there for death to overtake him; he came to meet it.

He perceived me, beckoned me to him, and drew me into the recess of a window.

"Well, Mr. Poet," said he to me, "what do you think of all that is going on now?"

"I'll tell you, marshal: that I think that we are shooting the rapids, and wasting our strength in going up the river that we ought to be going down."

"Pshaw! It is not possible that you have turned socialist?"

"I have never turned, marshal; but have always been one. What I think now I wrote out ten months ago. One neither hastens nor retards the march of nations; one follows it. If one hurries it, one is deceived, as the Czar Peter I. was deceived with regard to Russia. If one retards it, one is deceived, as King Louis Philippe was deceived with regard to France. Social movement has its laws, as terrestrial movement has hers. Blind is he who, with eyes fixed upon the sun, believes that it is the sun that moves and the earth that remains motionless."

"That is to say, that we are reactionaries—"

"Will the marshal permit me to tell him my whole thought?"

"Why, of course."

"Well, you are the man who would reassure me most on the other side of the Alps, and who frightens me most in this salon."

"And why is that?"

"Because he in whose house we are is already too ready for the fray; and if he has for allies men of your caliber, he will wrestle. Now, this wrestling reminds me of that of Jacob and the angel. The angel will triumph."

"The exterminating angel, then?"

"No; the reconstructing angel, on the contrary."

"You would like us to be dragged away by the movement?"

"I want better than that—I want you to direct it. There is always something for every living being to do; there is nothing for the dead to do. What lives is the present and future; what is dead is the past. Well, you throw yourself into the past when you have the future. This was the mistake of Charles X.; it was the mistake of Louis Philippe. I am very much afraid that it may also be that of Louis Napoleon."

"Did you say that to the Duke of Orleans?"

"Certainly, I told him so."

"And do you think that if he had become king he would have followed your advice?"

"If he had become king, neither Europe nor France would have been in the position in which they now are, since, if he had become king, a new revolution would not have taken place."

"February 24th is an accident that might have been foreseen and avoided."

"The 24th of February, like all great convulsions, came true to its hour. The 24th of February is not only the French Revolution, but the revolution of the world. Cast your eyes over Europe at the three different epochs—on January 21st, 1793, on July 29th, 1830, and on February 24th, 1848—and behold what progress republican ideas have made in sixty years. In 1793 all the people called by us to emancipation rise in revolt against us. In 1830 a few are aroused, stirred, and prepare for combat; but the struggle is partial, brief, and very soon repressed. In 1848 it is a pathway of flame that starts at Paris, follows the Rhine, gains the Danube, extends as far south as the Tiber, as far north as the Vistula. Eight days after the French Republic was proclaimed, two thirds of Europe were on fire, and this time see how the conflagration spreads instead of being extinguished. It is no longer constitutions that the people demand; they claim liberty in

all its fullness. Everywhere the word republic is pronounced. At Berlin, Vienna, Florence, Rome, Palermo, the people have broadened in their views; they have become strong in body and thought; they no longer want royal guardians. Well, there was no time to hesitate. He had to put himself at the head of the people; he had to do more with that one thought than Napoleon had done with the sword. He had failed in the conquest of bodies; he had now to try that of souls. Believe me that was a fine crusade to be preached by the first president of the French Republic, viz., that of universal liberty, a grand alliance to found, that alliance of peoples."

"And Proudhon, Leroux, Considerant, and their fellows, what did you do with them?"

"Nothing. I exalted events in a manner that they could not attain to. Believe me, there be some who cross with impunity the little stream in the Rue St. Antoine or the Canal St. Martin who would be drowned in the Rhine or the Danube."

"Then you disapprove of our expedition to Rome?"

"Certainly I do; for to be of avail, your expedition would have need of two antecedents—you should say to the Austrians: 'You shall not cross the Piedmont frontier;' you should say to the Russians: 'You shall not enter Hungary.' Then you would have the right to turn to the Romans and say to them: 'Rome is not the capital of a people—Rome is the capital of Christianity. The pope is not a king like other kings—he is the vicar of Christ. Rome does not belong to you, since it is the Catholic world which has made Rome great, rich, splendid. The pope does not belong to you, since it is not the Roman states that make the pope King of Rome, but a universal council. Finally, you would have to ally yourselves everywhere, not with men, but with principle, and this principle should be the one by which you live, think, and act."

"What you propose there would be universal war."

"Universal war, it may be, but at least it would be the last universal war. See how men grow with their ideas; see those Hungarians, a poor people numbering not more than eight or nine millions of men; see them raising an army of five hundred thousand soldiers, with two thousand four hundred cannon; see them with generals, gold, iron, everything in which they had been supposed to be lacking.

Behold them whipping the Austrians with one hand and the Russians with the other. See Venice, the voluptuous city, the commercial city, the city of marble palaces, rich stuffs and nightly serenades; behold her become war-like, behold her sustaining a siege of eighteen months, she whom one did not deem worthy of an assault. Well, these were our genuine allies, these Piedmontese who are ransomed, these Lombards who are oppressed, these Venetians who are bombarded, these battling Hungarians. We found there among the people six hundred allies whom Napoleon at the zenith of his power never found among kings; and of these trusty allies, these faithful friends, who would not have betrayed us at Hainault or abandoned us at Leipsic, for their interests were identical with our own. Stop, marshal. I see the president looking for you. Let me make a last wish for you; it is that you may beat Radetski at Marengo and get yourself killed at Salsbach; a victory such as Napoleon was wont to win, a bullet received like Turenne, that would be a beautiful close to a noble life."

He pressed my hand.

And he responded to the sign given him by the president.

These, then, are the reflections that came to me upon writing these lines:

"On November 3d, 1846, about four o'clock in the afternoon, I entered Cordova with my son and my dear, kind traveling companions, Maquet, Giraud, Boulanger, and Desbarolles. We came from Madrid, where we had left the Duke of Montpensier, and we were going to Algiers, where Marshal Bugeaud was awaiting our arrival."

It was after a three-days' journey on mule-back, after a day of such excessive heat that Alexander's horse, having fallen under him, could not be got up, and actually expired.

We feared detention at the custom-house—very severe at Cordova, we had been told; but on reading my name upon my trunks, the Spanish custom-house officers, who are well-read men, asked if I were the author of "The Three Guardsmen" and "The Count of Monte-Cristo," and upon my answering in the affirmative, they declared that they would take my simple word for it that I was not carrying with me any contraband articles.

Consequently they had graciously accosted me, and we had gone on our way to the post station hotel.

It goes without saying that Cordova, like all cities that one has been seeing in imagination for twenty years, and that one sees at last some fine day in reality, does not at all correspond to the idea that one has formed of it. The disenchantment had begun the moment that we first caught sight of it, had continued in the streets, and had accompanied us as far as the hotel.

It was our own fault. Why, some of the party had pictured it as a Roman city, others as an Arabian city, and lastly some as a Gothic town! Since we were in Spain, we should have expected to see a Spanish city, and none would have been disappointed.

Oh! very genuinely Spanish, from its rough pavements to its chimneyless roofs, with its trellised balconies and its green blinds. Beaumarchais had divined Cordova when he composed his "Barber of Seville."

But what had struck me as I gradually approached the ancient capital of the Saracenic kingdom, was not its Christian cathedral, was not its Moorish mosque, nor its three or four palm-trees waving their fan-like leaves; no, it was the magnificent line that the chain of the Sierra-Morena traced to the rear of the city, which stood out white against a blackground of deep blue.

Those mountains! To climb them was the height of my ambition.

From the time that we had set foot upon Spanish soil they had promised us sport—hunting stags, boars, and robbers.

At Ville-Major we thought that we saw robbers, but we had seen neither stags nor boars.

If we lost this opportunity that the Black Mountains offered us to see these three things combined, it is evident that it would never recur to us.

I was preoccupied, then, with but one thing. While my companions were organizing plans for sight-seeing in the city, I was meditating upon the way to accomplish an excursion into the mountains.

Sight-seeing within the city limits had alone been arranged for. People knew of my being in Spain, and rightly concluded that I would not quit Spain without visiting Cordova. Now, all the young men of letters at Cordova,

gentlemen or bankers, having visited France, all these had flocked to the hotel to offer us their services—services which we had accepted with the same cordiality as they were offered.

Streets, churches, museums, palaces, private houses, then all were expecting us, each door promising to fly open at the first sight of us. But the Sierra-Morena, which has no doors, the Sierra-Morena was pitilessly closed against us.

When these gentlemen, all hunters, had examined my guns, I had indeed spoken of a hunt on the mountain; but I had seen imprinted upon all their faces so many different expressions, all signifying: "A hunt in the Sierra-Morena! Ah, yes! Impossible! A hunt—but you are mad!" that without retracting the proposition I had insisted no more.

But one remembrance came back to me, and, like Satan, my pride was kindled. One of my friends traveling among the Druses had found in the road, borne there by the mountain-breeze, a copy of the *Journal des Débats* signed by me, and entitled "The Château of If." I was known, then, at Acre, Damascus, and Baalbec, since they read my publications. I was known at Cordova, since the custom-house officers let my trunks pass without opening them. Why should I not be known in the Sierra-Morena?

And if I were known in the Sierra-Morena, why should it not happen to me as it had happened to Ariosto with Duke Alphonso's bandits?

It was to be tried, and, above all, it was very tempting.

Now, while my friends were compassing the city, I got mine host to come up to my room, and having invited him to sit down opposite to me and reflect well before replying to me, as became a grave and sensible Spaniard, I asked of him:

"Is there any way of being put into communication with the gentlemen of the Sierra-Morena?"

Mine host looked hard at me.

"Are you recommended to them?" asked he.

"No."

"The devil! Then it will be difficult."

"So you think there is no way of communicating with them?"

"Yes; everything is possible. What is your wish?"

"To send a letter to them."

"I'll undertake to procure the agent."

"Will he bring back the answer?"

"Faithfully."

"And if these gentlemen of the Sierra give their word, will they keep it?"

"I do not think that there is a single example of their having failed in it."

"Then one can act according as their answer may be?"

"In all confidence."

"Give me paper, pen, and ink, and then procure for me the agent."

Mine host brought me the articles asked for, and I wrote:

"*To the Gentlemen of the Sierra-Morena:*

"An admirer of the immortal Cervantes, who unfortunately did not write 'Don Quixote,' but who would gladly give the best of his novels to have written it, desiring to know if the Spain of 1846 is still that of 1580, begs the gentlemen of the Sierra to let him know if he will be welcome among them in case that he should venture to ask their hospitality and permission to take a hunt with them on the mountain.

"He has four traveling companions who share his desire to visit the Sierra. But according to the answer that he awaits will he come alone or accompanied. He presents his best compliments to the gentlemen of the Sierra-Morena."

And I signed my name.

A quarter of an hour afterward the letter was sealed, mine host entered with a sort of shepherd.

"Here is your man," said he to me.

"How much does he ask?"

"Whatever you choose."

"When will he return?"

"When he can."

I gave him two duoros and the letter.

"Is he satisfied with that?" asked I of mine host.

Mine host questioned him.

"Yes," said he, "he is satisfied."

"Well, on his return, and if he brings me back a letter, he shall have two more duoros."

The messenger made a sign that all was well. He had understood what I said.

Then he added a few words in a dialect so peculiar that I could make nothing of them.

"He asks," said mine host, "in case that he should return in the night if he is to wait until morning, or awaken you."

"He is to wake me up, no matter what the hour may be."

"All right."

Both went out.

My friends returned. I did not tell them a word of what had passed. I waited.

During the night of the next day, toward one o'clock of the day after the morrow, I heard a knock at my door.

I went to open it. There were mine host and my messenger. The latter held a letter in his hand.

Eagerly I took possession of the letter and unsealed it.

The noise had awakened my companions. We five occupied three rooms opening one into the other. I saw some then raise themselves, leaning on their elbows, and others passing their heads through the openings of the doors, all questioning me with their eyes.

"Gentlemen," said I, on turning around, "you are invited to a grand hunt in the Sierra-Morena."

"By whom?"

"Why, by those who live there, of course."

"What! by the—"

"Hush!" said Alexander, "let us not call things, and more especially men, by their names. We'll leave that to Boileau."

"Impossible!" said the five other voices in chorus.

"But here is the letter."

"'Mr. Alexander Dumas may come, accompanied by nine persons. He will be expected at the fountain of the battlemented house on the 7th instant, from five to six o'clock in the morning.

"'We shall receive him in the best way that we can, and have the finest possible hunt with him.

"'It is useless for him to trouble himself as to the beaters-up and the dogs.

"'From the Sierra, November 5th, 1846.

"'On the part of myself and my companions,

"'THE TORERO.'

"What say you to that?"

"Hurrah for the robbers of the Sierra-Morena!" shouted the whole set of them.

"Yes; but as, in order to be at the meet designated, we shall have to set out to-morrow at two o'clock in the morning, let us go to sleep now."

And I gave the messenger the two other douros, who agreed to come back on the morrow, in the course of the day, to see if we had need of a guide.

Early the next morning I had our Cordovan friends notified that I had news of the highest importance to communicate to them. They lost no time in putting in an appearance.

Two of them were young men twenty-five or twenty-six years old, one being named Paroldo, and the other Hernandez de Cordoba.

The first was the son of a rich banker in the city, the other a nobleman enjoying his fortune, which was valued at a hundred thousand reals a year.

The third was a man of thirty-five or thirty-six years of age, a citizen of Cordova, noted for high living and high spirits, always ready for everything provided that the question were of women, feasting, or the chase.

His name was Ravès.

When they were all together, I told them of the advance that I had made to the gentlemen of the Sierra, and communicated to them the answer which I had received.

They looked at each other, after having read.

"Well," said Paroldo, "what say you to it, Hernandez? And you, Ravès?"

"I? I say it is splendid!"

"Is the rendezvous for to-morrow morning?" asked Paroldo.

"For to-morrow morning, you see."

"Well, let us all make ready for to-morrow morning."

"You see no inconvenience in this expedition?"

"How?—as to danger?"

"Yes."

"None."

"You see, I am not willing that a fancy of mine should drag you into too adventurous an expedition."

"Oh! from the moment that the word of these gentlemen has been given, you will be in as great security among

them as you are here in this hotel, and we in the bosom of our families."

"Is there any use in my taking my messenger?"

"What for?"

"To serve as our guide."

"Oh! that is useless, for we all know the road. Only you have a right to take nine persons, have you not? You have four companions, which, with us three, makes eight. There remains one person to be invited. Have you cast your eyes upon any one?"

"Upon no one. I only know you three men in Cordova, as you are well aware."

"Then, if you have no objection, we shall invite one of our friends, who is a little of an outlaw. You will see that he is not going to be useless to us."

"Invite him. Now, we must busy ourselves about the horses, mules, asses, and provisions."

"Permit us to make all these details our affair."

"On one condition."

"Unconditionally."

"Be it so. I am your guest. Do as you will."

"To-night, at two A. M., the horses will be at the door of the hotel."

"Bravo!"

We separated. Two hours afterward the whole city knew of the projected expedition.

My messenger came to ask if I would accept his services as guide. I thanked him, and gave him a third gratuity.

Then I called up my poor Paul.

Those who have read my trip to Spain or my voyage to Africa are acquainted with Paul. For the sake of those who have read neither of those two works, I will tell who Paul was in a few words.

He was a handsome young Arab from Sennaar, who, while still a child, had left the banks of the river Rahab to come to Europe. He was twenty or twenty-two years old, and was to die near me in my own house when only twenty-three years of age.

Poor Paul! I did not suspect when I made of him one of the most comical characters of my journeys into Africa and Spain that I should have to mourn his loss before my pen had traced the last word of those travels.

Paul was born to be the steward of a wealthy home,

His air was distinguished. In the midst of the other domestics he had the air of a negro prince born to rule but reduced to captivity.

He had, it is true, a few little faults that detracted from these lofty qualities; but I have no longer the heart to speak of these defects. Besides, those who would like to make Paul's acquaintance, and feel as if they had seen him, have only to read the impressions of travel entitled "From Paris to Cadiz."

I had Paul to come, then, and said to him:

"Paul, we are invited to-morrow to a chase by the gentlemen robbers of the Sierra-Morena. We shall stay two or three days with them. Prepare all that is needful for such an excursion."

Paul was never astonished; he only asked:

"Will silver plate be needed?"

I traveled with a small chest of silver—enough for a dozen covers.

"To be sure, my dear," replied I. "It is an experiment that I am making."

"Then, for those three days, sir, please take account of the silver, and relieve me of the responsibility."

"Yes, Paul; be easy."

"All right, sir, you may depend upon me; at two o'clock in the morning everything will be ready."

Upon that assurance I retired at ten o'clock in the evening.

At two o'clock in the morning I was awakened by such a rumpus as I have barely heard.

One would have said that it was the tramping of a regiment of cavalry in the court.

It was, in fact, something that resembled it strongly.

There were fifteen asses, horses, and mules, accompanied by their drivers.

I have never seen a more picturesque scene than the one presented by that court when we went down.

It was one of those great square courts with arcades furnishing a shelter against rain, and extending over the four faces of the building.

The center was filled by an immense orange-tree as large as an oak.

Under this shelter our asses and mules were stamping, lighted by a dozen torches borne by the drivers.

The flame of these torches played upon all the luminous points of the equipment of the animals and the costume of the men, then was lost in the dense, dark foliage of the orange-tree, from the midst of which shone its golden fruit.

Two mules were laden with provisions, a third carried baggage, and upon this third one, Paul, in Arabic costume, was already installed.

Two Andalusian horses, one white, the other dun, with their riders in hunting costume, a gun at the horse's cropper, and a dagger in the belt, were waiting for us.

These were for Hernandez and Ravès.

Paroldo was mounted in order to hasten our movements, and gave his orders like the general of an army. In all that caravan a magnificent white ass, with a red velvet saddle, tall, proud, and impatient as a horse, attracted my eye by his magnificent carriage, and enabled me to comprehend the continual praise that Sancho Panza bestowed upon his beast, and which heretofore had struck me as exaggerated.

As soon as I appeared, Ravès and Hernandez alighted, and with the formal courtesy which belongs only to Spaniards, offered me their horses; but Paroldo had forestalled them, announcing that the famous white ass was destined for my use.

The caravan was put in motion. I have never seen anything more grotesque than that long serpent winding its way by night through the streets of Cordova, every now and then flushed with light when some opening accidentally admitted the moon's rays.

The two horses marched at the head, then came the white ass, using every exertion to keep the first rank. Behind the white ass straggled along in the capricious independence of their gait, ten or so ordinary donkeys, without saddles, bridles, or thongs, with a simple cloth thrown over their backs and fastened under the belly. Of spurs there was no more question than of thongs, bridles, and saddles. Lastly, two or three mules laden with our provisions and luggage ended the column and formed a rear guard.

At a quarter of a league from the city the young man Ravès, Paroldo, and Hernandez had been commissioned to invite, joined us. He rode a piebald horse, and wore the costume of the Manchegos—that is to say, the vest, panta-

loons, and cap of goat-skin, the hair turned outside. This costume gave him a wild look that added its share of the picturesque to that already possessed by our caravan.

The ground that separated Cordova from the foot of the mountains appeared to me, as well as I could judge of it by the light of the moon, veined like a huge tablet of red marble; everywhere ravines, dug by the heat, cracked the tormented earth, and the road across the plain followed a devious track imposed upon it by the caprices of the soil.

Every minute or so we heard the sound of a falling body and a gun going off in the fall. We turned around and perceived an ass without its rider nibbling a blade of grass or browsing upon a thistle; then in the shadow a mass, shapeless at first, that very soon lengthened out and stood up, resuming the aspect of a man, took his place again upon the back of the complaisant animal that took up his cavalier again, only upon the well-understood condition that he would be rid of him again at the first opportunity.

When we came to the first slopes of the Sierra it was nearly four o'clock, the moon shining with a luster vivid enough to enable one to read a letter by it. No sound was to be heard. The mountain seemed to receive us with a religious silence; from time to time, upon the last limits of the plain, we saw, gleaming under a silvered ray, some country house embowered in a forest of orange-trees, the perfume from which mingled with that little morning breeze which an hour before sunrise gently kisses the surface of the earth, and seems like the last sigh of night.

As we gradually approached the mountain, the white extremity of the road which we followed seemed to be swallowed up under an overshadowing arch, that might well be compared to a crouching monster occupied in devouring a serpent.

This gaping mouth was the continuation of the route, which from a road became a path, and on both sides arose a sort of forest growth composed of green shrubs and oaks, the branches of which met overhead, forming that threatening cavity which was making ready to swallow us up.

We went into it feeling instinctively that we were quitting civilized for savage regions, and that this line crossed, we had no other protection to ask for than our own.

After going about fifty yards over this hilly ascent, a singular circumstance struck us. It was this: the road was

edged by crosses bearing inscriptions. To the first and second of these crosses we paid no attention; but coming to the third, fourth, and fifth, we asked what they signified.

Our four Cordovans laughed aloud at our simplicity.

"Get down and read," Paroldo said to me.

I was preparing to get down, but perceived that I would be taking useless trouble, seeing that one of these crosses, nailed to the trunk of a tree, was easily within the range of my vision. It was surmounted by a consecrated bunch of boxwood, and in white letters was to be read on the transverse beam this inscription:

"En esto sitio fu asacinado el Conde Roderigo de Torrejas, anno 1845."

Which signified:

"In this place was assassinated Count Roderigo de Torrejas, in the year 1845."

Ten steps beyond was a second inscription.

This second one was yet more concise than the first. It contained only these words:

"Aqui fu asacinado su hijo Hernandez de Torrejas."

There were nearly ten yards between these two inscriptions.

The second read thus:

"Here was assassinated his son, Hernandez de Torrejas."

What a terrible tragedy must have been enacted within this small space while the son witnessed the murder of his father or the father that of the son.

I had our comrades to read the inscription as well.

"Gentlemen," said I, "there is still time for you to return to Cordova."

The word "Forward!" was the only answer of the caravan, which continued its onward course.

Upon this route alone, in the space of a quarter of a league, we counted eighteen crosses.

The path ascended by a steeper grade, and in proportion as we rose higher we seemed to advance toward the light; the road, six or eight yards wide, on the left rested against

the flank of the Sierra, and on the right overtopped a precipice that every minute became more deep.

At the foot of the precipice the darkness of night still prevailed, while the receding plain began to put on lighter tints.

On the third level Cordova was descried, fairy-like in white lights and blue shadows, with its Guadalquivir, which, reflecting the crimson tints of dawn, seemed to roll on a river of flames.

Finally, on the verge of the most distant horizon, the mountains that we had traversed in order to come from Granada to Cordova were lost in violet tints transparent and soft.

So long as our eyes could take in this marvelous plain, they were not withdrawn from it a single instant. Our painters uttered cries of admiration and regret, for they felt that never could brush, pencil, nor palette ever approach the sublime spectacle that the Sierra unveiled to their eyes.

Finally we gained the summit of one of the first heights, and turning rapidly to the left, all that marvelous panorama remained behind us.

Ten minutes afterward it was veiled by a curtain of trees, and we were to see it no more until our return.

Arrived at this first plateau, we proceeded for some time over level ground, and then began to climb a second ascent. After nearly three quarters of an hour this second height was gained, and we descended under the shade of a sort of forest, through which now began to filter the first rays of sunshine.

We took another half hour to cross this forest, the trees of which soon began to grow more sparse, and through the clearings we began to perceive a small plain thoroughly cleared up.

In the center of this plain rose a fountain, its abundant waters flowing into a great stone trough; around the fountain stood waiting for us about thirty men and forty dogs.

On perceiving us the men uncovered and the dogs barked.

To the right, commanding the passage, where men and animals were grouped, arose a fortified house. This it was that had given its name to the fountain.

This fountain was the place of rendezvous; these men were our hosts, the gentlemen of the Sierra-Morena.

We put our horses into a trot, then, when we came within ten steps of the company, stopped and alighted.

As I had taken the initiative in this expedition, they made of me the principal personage, and pushed me to the front.

I met half-way a man of from forty to forty-two years, with a genuine Spanish face, black beard, black eyes, bronzed complexion, short and crisped hair, white teeth, and open countenance.

This was the Torero.

We shook hands, and exchanged a few words which mutual politeness made us seem to understand. After this all the groups mingled, and henceforth we were a compact mass.

Breakfast was awaiting us. There were haunches of dried venison, boar hams, and wines from Malaga, Alicante, and Xérès.

On our side, we had our provisions unloaded. We brought what can not be procured in the mountain—that is to say, pâtés, Grenada hams, turkeys, pullets, olives, goat-skin bottles full of a mild wine from Montila, that resembles our De Grave wine.

They deposited all on the ground.

I made a sign to Paul.

Paul comprehended. He opened the box of silver, throwing handfuls of silver knives and forks upon the mantles that were to serve for table-cloths.

Then he placed the empty box in the center of the table companions.

The Torero regarded his comrades with an air that seemed to say: "Well, what do you say to that?"

Our hosts responded by a nod of satisfaction.

Each took with the end of his fingers a knife or fork, and they began to carve.

Setting out from this moment, the acquaintance was perfectly cemented, and our hosts became for us, and we for them, ordinary members of a hunting party.

The dogs, too, from this moment seemed to have accepted us no longer as strangers, but as so many masters the more. This was not a pacification to be despised. These

half-savage dogs, which held the mean between a fox and a wolf, were terrible to look at.

A few loaves were judiciously distributed to them, in a measure calculated to preserve their strength without taking away their appetites. Hounds hunt for them. In order that they hunt well they must never have their hunger more than half satisfied.

Every one was in a hurry to begin the chase. Moreover, after a half hour, which, it must be owned, was actively employed by all, our hosts themselves gave the signal for departure by going to wash knives and forks at the fountain, and restoring them to the box.

The fact was that the sun began to mount on high, and we were forewarned that we had still a league to go before arriving at the first beat.

"Well?" asked I of Paul.

"What would you have, sir?"

"The silver?"

"It is all in place."

"Then go ahead."

And bestriding my model ass, I again took the head of the column, and we proceeded yet deeper into the mountain.

After a half hour's march they abandoned horses, asses, and mules to the care of muleteers, and continued their course on foot.

The Torero had taken possession of me, undertaking to place my son as well as myself, which was as much as to say that, in his opinion at least, he reserved for us the best places.

Arrived at the station selected for me, I stopped and made ready my carbine. It was an excellent double-barreled gun, having a hunting-knife for a bayonet, and requiring to be loaded with peaked balls.

The Torero begged me to load it in his presence, that he might study its mechanism. This was a breech-loader, and it was the first time that a weapon of the sort had ever come under his observation.

He examined it with the greatest attention, and returned it to me; then, without regret or jealousy, set himself to loading his own gun with rolls of paper that he tore at the moment from a little manuscript pamphlet.

After which, having recommended silence to me, he took my son away with him.

Left alone, I examined the features of the landscape. We encircled a high pyramidal-shaped mountain all covered with mastic and arbutus-trees, six or eight feet in height. Here and there, like enormous warts, in the midst of the deep green of the shrubs, were gray rocks of rounded form; below my feet was a small, circular dale, that skirted the base of the mountain, and, extending all around it, reminded one of the brim of a hat. All this portion, a little less wooded than the pyramid, through openings in the bushes, gave us glimpses of the animals that the dogs, supported by the hunters, were going to beat up for us.

The Torero had forewarned me that we should have a half hour to wait before the hunt began. I then cast my eyes about me, asking what I was going to do with this half hour. In this topographical investigation I perceived on the ground the copy-book from the cover of which the Torero had already borrowed two wads, which undoubtedly he had meant to return to his pocket, but had inadvertently dropped.

I picked it up and lay down under the shade of an arbutus-tree, whose red fruit, like huge strawberries, were waving above my head, and read:

"Histoire maravillosa de Don Bernardo de Zuniga."

That is to say:

"The Marvelous Story of Don Bernardo de Zuniga."

This chronicle was in manuscript, and consequently in all probability unknown.

As it was short, and inasmuch as the chase, instead of beginning at the end of a half hour, did not begin for forty-five minutes, I had had time to read it from A to Z, when the dogs gave us their first summons.

Here it is.

XVII.

STORY OF DON BERNARDO DE ZUNIGA.

It was on January 25th, 1492. After a struggle of eight hundred years against the Spaniards, the Moors had just declared themselves conquered in the person of Al-Shaghyr-Abou-Abdallah, who, on the sixth of the preceding month—that is to say, the day of the kings—had deliv-

ered up the city of Granada into the hands of their conquerors, Ferdinand and Isabella.

The Moors had conquered Spain in two years; it had required eight centuries for her to retake it from them.

The report of this victory had been spread abroad. Throughout Spain the bells were ringing in the churches, as on the holy day of Easter, when our Lord arose from the dead, and all voices cried: "Long live Ferdinand! Long live Isabella! Long live Leon! Long live Castille!"

That was not all yet. They said that in this blessed year, in which God had regarded Spain with a father's eye, a great traveler had presented himself before the two sovereigns and had promised to give them an unknown world that he was certain of discovering by going always from east to west.

But this generally passed for a fable, and the adventurer who had proffered this engagement, and whom they called Christopher Columbus, was regarded as a fool.

Moreover, these tidings at that period of difficult communication had not yet spread in a very positive manner over the whole surface of the peninsula. In proportion as topographically the provinces were remote from the provinces in which the Moors had concentrated their power, and as the surrender had been made to Ferdinand and Isabella only nineteen days before, just as, in proportion as, on quitting a center of light, objects gradually retire into obscurity, by degrees the people began to doubt this great happiness which had come to all Christianity, and pressing eagerly around each traveler who arrived from the theater of war, they would ask him for the particulars of that great event.

One of the provinces, not the furthest off, but separated most decidedly from Granada—for two great chains of mountains stretch between it and that city—that is, Estramadura; Estramadura, situated between New Castille and Portugal, and which owes its name to its remote position near the sources of the Duero. Estramadura, finally, had an interest so much the greater in getting information, because, already delivered from the Moors as early as 1240 by Ferdinand III. of Castille, it belonged from that time to the kingdom which Isabella had inherited—she who had just won the name of Catholic.

She had gathered together a great crowd, too, on that day when this story opens—that is to say, on January 25th, 1492—in the court-yard of the Castle de Béjar, which had just been entered by Don Bernardo de Zuniga, third son of Pierre Zuniga, Count de Bagnarès and Marquis d'Ayamonte, master of this castle. Now, nobody could give fresher news of the Moors and Christians than Don Bernardo de Zuniga, who, as a knight of Isabella's army, had been made prisoner in one of those sallies attempted by the hero of the Arabs, Mousay-Ebn-Aby'l-Gazan, and carried back wounded into the besieged city, the gates of which had only been opened to them on the day when the Christians had made their *entrée*.

Don Bernardo, at the period when he appears before us —that is to say, at the moment when, after an absence of ten years, he re-entered the paternal castle, mounted upon his battle-horse, and surrounded by domestics, men-at-arms, and vassals, was a man between thirty-five and forty years of age, emaciated through fatigue—and, above all, wounds—and who would have been pale if his face, burned by the southern sun, had not acquired a bronzed hue which seemed to make of him the compatriot and brother of the men whom he had just fought. This resemblance was the more exact that, enveloped as he was in the great white cloak of the Order of Alcantara, a fold of that cloak wound around his face to protect him against the mountain breezes, nothing distinguished that cloak from the Arabian burnous unless it might be the green cross that the knight of this holy order wore upon the left side of his breast.

This retinue, which entered with him into the castle court, accompanied him from his appearance at the gates of the city. Even before he had been recognized they had guessed that this man with the melancholy eye, heroic bearing, and cloak half monastic, half war-like came from the seat of war. They had kept near him in order to get the news. Then he had revealed his name, had invited the good people to follow him into the castle yard, and arrived there, he had just alighted amid marks of universal affection and regard.

After having thrown his horse's bridle into the hands of a squire, and recommended to him that brave companion of his toils, which, like his master, bore more than one visible trace of the struggle which he had just sustained,

Don Bernardo de Zuniga mounted the steps of a flight of stairs conducting to the principal entrance to the castle; then having gained the last step, he turned around, telling, in order to satisfy the curiosity of all, how Ferdinand the Catholic, after having conquered thirty strongholds and as many cities, had ended by laying siege to Granada; how, after a long and terrible siege, Granada had surrendered on November 25th, 1491, and how, finally, the king and queen had made their triumphal entry into it on January 6th, 1492—the day of the Holy Epiphany—leaving as his sole possession to the successor of the kings of Granada and the caliphs of Cordova a small endowment in the Alpujarras.

This information having given great joy to his hearers, Don Bernardo entered the castle, followed only by his most trusted followers.

It was not without great emotion that, after the lapse of ten years, Don Bernardo saw again the interior of the home of his childhood, and realized that he had returned to find it empty, his father residing at Burgos, and of his two elder brothers, one being dead and the other in the army of Ferdinand.

Don Bernardo in sadness and silence traversed all the apartments. It might be said that a question trembled on his lips that he could not utter, and which yet was the mainspring of all the questions that he did ask. Finally, stopping before the portrait of a little girl aged nine or ten years, he inquired, with a certain hesitation, whose portrait that was.

The man to whom this question was addressed gazed fixedly at Don Bernardo before replying to it.

"That portrait?" asked he.

"Undoubtedly that portrait," repeated Don Bernardo in a more imperative tone.

"Why, monseigneur, it is that of your cousin Anne de Niébla. It is impossible that your lordship can have forgotten that young orphan who was brought up at the castle, and who was your eldest brother's destined bride."

"Ah! that is true," said Don Bernardo. "And what has become of her?"

"When your eldest brother died, in 1488, monseigneur, your father ordered that Anne de Niébla should enter the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, of the Order of

Calatrava, and that she should take her vows there, your second brother being married, and your lordship belonging to an order that prescribes celibacy."

Don Bernardo heaved a sigh.

"That is exactly right," said he.

And he put no other question.

Only as Anne de Niébla was much loved in the Castle de Béjar, the good man, profiting by the conversation having fallen upon the young heiress, tried to continue it.

But at the first word said upon this subject, Don Bernardo imposed silence upon him in a way that made him understand that he had learned all that he desired to know.

As for the rest, he was not to be mistaken as to the causes which had determined the return of Don Bernardo to the castle of his fathers—for he took care from that very day to let everybody know the cause. The Castle of Béjar was situated two or three leagues from a spring known as the Holy Fountain, and which undoubtedly owed to its nearness to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception its privilege of performing miracles.

This fountain was especially famous for the cure of wounds; and, as we have said, Don Bernardo was still thin, pale, and suffering from the wounds which he had received at the siege of Granada.

The next day, too, Don Bernardo resolved to commence the treatment from which, according to his religious faith, he hoped a prompt cure would result. The course was very easy to follow. Don Bernardo should do what the poorest peasant would do who came to implore assistance from the holy Madonna, under whose patronage was the fountain.

Above the spring arose a little hill formed by a single rock. At the top of this hill arose a cross. A person had to climb to the rock barefooted, then kneel before the cross, and devoutly repeat five Pater Nosters and five Hail Marys, then he had to descend, always barefooted, and drink a glass of water, and then retire to his own abode.

Pilgrimages were divided into *neuvaines*—that is to say, periods of nine days. At the end of the third *neuvaine*—that is to say, at the end of the twenty-seventh day—it was a rare thing for the patient not to be cured.

The next day, in fact, at dawn, Don Bernardo de Zuniga had his horse brought out of the stable; and as, a hundred

times in his youth, he had made the trip to the fountain, he set out alone to accomplish his pilgrimage to the shrine of health.

Arrived at the spring, he alighted, fastened his horse to a tree, took off his foot-gear, climbed the rock barefooted, repeated his five Pater Nosters and his five Hail Marys, descended, drank a glass of water at the spring itself, remounted his horse, cast a look, undoubtedly religious, toward the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, which, at the distance of half a league, appeared through the trees, and returned to his castle.

Each day Don Bernardo went through the same proceeding, and it was manifest that the miraculous water acted beneficially upon his body, although his mood remained melancholy, reserved, almost savage.

Thus passed the three *neuvaines*. During the last days of the third, his health was fully restored, and he had already announced the day for his return to the army, when, on the trenty-seventh day, as he was on his knees before the cross, saying his Ave before the last, he saw advancing a procession that was not void of interest for a man who had so often, as he bid farewell to the fountain, cast his eyes upon the Convent of the Immaculate Conception.

It was a procession composed of nuns accompanying a litter uncovered and borne by peasants. Upon this litter was a nun whom they seemed to be bearing in triumph to the fountain. The nuns who accompanied the litter and the one who was lying upon it were all scrupulously veiled.

Instead of descending, as was his custom, to drink at the fountain, Don Bernardo waited, doubtless curious to see what was going to pass.

His curiosity was so great that he forgot to say his last Hail Mary.

The procession paused before the spring, the nun lying on the couch got down, took off her shoes and stockings, and with a tottering step at first, but one that gradually grew firm, began her ascent. On arriving at the foot of the cross, which Don Bernardo's retirement had left free, the nun fell upon her knees, prayed, arose, and went below to rejoin her companions.

It was an illusion, but it seemed to Don Bernardo that just as the nun knelt, and again when she rose from her

knees, that her eyes rested upon him for an instant through her veil.

On his side, at the approach of the holy maid, Don Bernardo had felt a strange emotion; something like a flash of light had passed before his eyes, and he had leaned against a tree for support, as if the rock, unsteady at its base, had trembled beneath him.

But in proportion as the nun withdrew, Bernardo's strength returned to him; then, in order to follow her longer with his eyes, he had leaned over the edge of the rock that overhung the spring. The nun had descended, had drawn near the fountain, and making herself visible to the hallowed water alone, she had put aside her veil and drunk at the spring itself, as was the custom.

But then had happened a thing of which no one would have dreamed, and which consequently none could have foreseen. The limpid crystal of the fountain was changed into a mirror, and from the place whence he looked Don Bernardo de Zuniga saw the image of the nun as distinctly as if it had been reflected from a glass.

In spite of her pallor, she was such a miracle of beauty that Don Bernardo de Zuniga uttered a cry of surprise and admiration loud enough to cause a thrill to pass through the holy patient, who, after having barely steeped her lips in the water, crossed her veil over her bosom, and was again placed on her litter, not, however, without her turning her head a last time in the direction of the imprudent cavalier.

Don Bernardo de Zuniga rapidly descended the steps in the rock, and addressing himself to one of the spectators of this scene:

"Do you know," asked he of him, "who this woman is that has just drunk at the fountain, and whom they are transporting to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception?"

"Yes," replied the man questioned; "it is a nun who has just had a spell of illness that every one believed would be fatal, since she actually appeared to be dead for more than an hour; but, thanks to this blessed water, she has been cured—at least, in so far that to-day she goes out for the first time to carry out her vow of coming herself to drink at the fountain the water that until now has been drawn for her here."

"And," asked Don Bernardo, with an emotion that indicated the importance that he attached to the question, "do you know the name of this nun?"

"Yes, to be sure I do, monseigneur; her name is Anne de Niébla, and she is the niece of Pierre de Zuniga, Count of Begnarès, Marquis d'Ayamonte, whose son, returned nearly a month ago from the army, has brought the good news of the capture of Granada."

"Anne de Niébla," murmured Don Bernardo. "Ah! I ought to have recognized her surely; but I never could have believed that she would grow up to be so beautiful!"

XVIII.

THE CHAPELET OF ANNE DE NIEBLA.

Don Bernardo then had seen again the young girl whom he had left a child in the Castle of Béjar, and whose memory, according to all probability, had pursued him during the ten years of his absence.

During these ten years of solitary dreaming, in which the thought of Don Bernardo had followed the progress of Anna de Niébla in the early spring-time of life, the young girl had become a woman; she had attained the age of twenty, while Don Bernardo was thirty-five; she had taken the veil as a nun, while he had assumed the habit of a knight of Alcantara.

She was the bride of the Lord, he the vowed soldier of Christ.

To these two young people, brought up in the same home, since going forth from that home all communication by word of mouth had been interdicted, all exchange of regard been prohibited.

This, most assuredly, is the reason why the sight of his cousin, in the strange mirror which had portrayed to him her features, had awakened so lively an emotion in the heart of Don Bernardo de Zuniga.

He returned to his castle, but yet more pensive, gloomy, and taciturn than usual; and almost immediately he went and shut himself up in the chamber where he had seen that portrait of Anne de Niébla, taken when she was a child. Undoubtedly he sought to retrace upon the canvas the moving features which he had just seen trembling in the

fountain; to follow their juvenile development through the ten years that had just elapsed, to see them blossom forth into life, as a flower expands in the sunshine.

He who for fifteen years, upon battle-fields, in surprises of the camp, in assaults of cities, had been struggling against the mortal enemies of his country and his religion, did not even for an instant try to resist that more terrible enemy which had just engaged him in a hand-to-hand conflict, and felled him at the first blow.

Don Bernardo de Zuniga, knight of Alcantara, loved Anne de Niébla, the nun of the Immaculate Conception.

He must fly—fly without losing an instant; return to real combats, to those physical wounds which kill nothing but the body. Don Bernardo had not the requisite courage.

On the next day, although his *neuvaine* was finished all same one Ave Maria, he returned to the fountain, but not to pray. Love had taken possession of his heart and left no room for prayer. Seated on the top of the rock, with his eyes turned toward the convent, he waited for a new procession like that which he had already seen and which did not come.

He waited thus for three days, without rest or sleep, keeping a steady watch upon the convent, the doors of which remained pitilessly closed. The fourth day, which was Sunday, he knew that the doors of the church would be open, and that any one could find admission there.

Only, shut up in the choir, the nuns were chanting behind voluminous curtains, so that they were heard without being seen.

And that day, so greatly longed for, arrived at last. Unfortunately Don Bernardo awaited it with an object entirely profane; the idea that this day was the one in which he could draw near to the Lord did not even enter his mind, for his only thought was to get near to Anne de Niébla.

At the hour when the gates of the convent were opened he was there in waiting.

At two o'clock in the morning he had gone himself to the stable, had saddled his horse, and gone out without apprising any one of his design. From two o'clock until eight he had wandered about in the neighborhood of the fountain, no longer with his head enveloped in his great-

cloak in order to shield himself from the mountain breezes, but with bare head, imploring all the winds of night to come and cool the burning flame that seemed to him to be devouring his brain.

Once inside the church, Don Bernardo went and threw himself on his knees as near as possible to the choir of the church, and there he remained in waiting, with his knees upon the flag-stone and his forehead pressed against the marble.

Divine worship began. Don Bernardo had not a thought for the Saviour of men whose holy sacrifice was being commemorated; his whole soul was open as a vase to absorb those chants that he had promised himself, and from among which Anne de Niébla's chant was to ascend to heaven.

Every time that, in the midst of that sweet concert, a voice more harmonious, more pure and vibrating than the others, made itself heard, a thrill would quiver through Don Bernardo's frame, and mechanically he would lift his clasped hands heavenward. It might have been said that he tried to suspend himself to that sweet harmony and with it scale the skies.

Then when the sound had died away, covered up by other voices or exhausted through its own ecstasy, he fell back with a sigh, as if he had lived only for that musical vibration, and without it could not exist.

The mass was finished in the midst of emotions hitherto unknown. The chanting ceased, the last tones of the organ died away, the assistants left the church, and the officiating clergymen returned to the convent. The temple was no longer anything but a corpse, mute and motionless; prayer, which was the soul of it, had reascended to heaven.

Don Bernardo remained alone; then he could look around him. Above his head was hanging a picture representing the angelic salutation; in one corner of the painting was the donor on her knees with joined hands.

The knight of Alcantara uttered a cry of surprise. The donor, that woman represented upon her knees with clasped hands in a corner of the picture, was Anne de Niébla.

He called the sacristan, who was putting out the wax lights, and questioned him.

That picture was the work of Anne de Niébla herself; she had represented herself on her knees and in prayer, according to the custom of the times, which almost always claimed for the donor an humble place upon the sacred canvas.

The hour for retiring had come. In obedience to the request of the sacristan, Don Bernardo bowed and went out.

An idea had come to him, which was, to obtain possession of that picture at any price.

But all the proposals that he made or caused to be made to the superior of the convent were refused, the steady reply being that what had been given was not to be sold.

Don Bernardo vowed that he would become the owner of that picture. He put together all the money that he could get, which amounted to nearly twenty thousand reals —much more than the actual value of the picture—and he resolved, the first Sunday that came, to penetrate into the church with all the rest of the people, as he had already done; to keep himself concealed in some corner, and at night detach it from its place and roll up the canvas, leaving at the same time the twenty thousand reals upon the altar from which he had removed the picture.

As to getting out of the church, he had remarked that the windows were twelve feet from the floor at most, and that they opened upon the church-yard. He would pile up chairs, one upon the other, and easily escape from the church by a window.

Then he would regain the castle with his treasure, would have it framed magnificently, would place it opposite the portrait of Anne de Niébla, and would pass his life in that room which would hold all he held dear in life.

The days and nights elapsed while he was wrapped up in expectancy of the next Sunday, which came at last.

Don Bernardo de Zuniga was one of the first to enter the church, as he had been the Sunday before. He had upon his person the twenty thousand reals in gold.

But what struck him the first thing was the funereal aspect that the church had assumed. Across the railing of the choir were seen to shine the tip ends of wax candles lighting the top of a catafalque.

Don Bernardo inquired as to the meaning of this.

The same morning a nun had died, and the mass at which he was going to be present was a mortuary one.

But, as we have said, Don Bernardo did not come for mass; he came to prepare for the accomplishment of his project.

The angelic picture was in its place, above the altar, in the chapel of the Virgin.

The lowest window was ten or twelve feet from the ground, and, thanks to the benches and chairs superadded, nothing was easier than to get out.

These thoughts preoccupied Don Bernardo during the whole time of divine service. His conscience told him, to be sure, that he was going to commit a bad action; but in consideration of his whole life having been spent in fighting infidels, and in consideration of the enormous sum that he was to leave instead of the picture, he hoped that the Lord would pardon him.

Then, from time to time, he would listen to those funereal chants, and from among all those fresh, pure, and sonorous voices, he would vainly seek to catch the tones of that voice whose touching sweetness eight days before had stirred every fiber of his being, and had caused them to vibrate with emotion, as a celestial harp under the fingers of a seraphim.

That harmonious string was absent, and it might have been said that a fret was lacking in the religious key-board.

Mass was over. Each one left in his turn. As he passed by a confessional, Don Bernardo de Zuniga opened it, entered, and closed it behind him.

Nobody saw him.

The doors of the church creaked upon their hinges. Bernardo heard the bolts grinding. The steps of the sacristan grazed the confessional in which he was hidden, and died away. Silence held sway.

Only now and then, in the choir which was always closed, the muffled sound of a step was heard on the flagstones, and then the murmur of a prayer made in a low voice.

This was some nun who had come to recite the Virgin's litanies over the body of her deceased companion.

Night came, and darkness spread over the church; the choir alone was still lighted, transformed, as it were, into a chapel aflame.

Then the moon rose, and one of its rays, passing athwart a window, threw its dim light into the church.

All sounds of life gradually died away both without and within. About eleven o'clock the last prayers around the dead ceased, and everything made way for that religious silence peculiar to churches, cloisters, and cemeteries.

The monotonous and regular screech of an owl, perched, in all probability, upon some tree near to the church, alone continued to be heard with its sad periodicity.

Don Bernardo thought that the moment had come for accomplishing his design. He pushed the door of the confessional where he was concealed, and prepared to set foot upon the flag-stones outside.

At the moment when he left his retreat the clock began to strike the hour of midnight.

He waited, motionless, until the twelve strokes had slowly vibrated, and were lost little by little in insensible shudderings, in order to quit the confessional altogether, and proceed to the choir. He wanted to make sure that nobody was any longer watching by the dead, and that no one would thwart him in the accomplishment of his design.

But he had no sooner taken one step toward the choir than its grated door opened and a nun appeared.

Don Bernardo uttered a cry. That nun was Anne de Niébla.

Her raised veil left her face uncovered. A crown of white roses fastened her veil to her head. She held in her hand an ivory chaplet, that appeared yellow compared with the hand that held it.

"Anne!" exclaimed the young man.

"Don Bernardo!" murmured the nun.

Don Bernardo rushed forward.

"You called my name?" cried Don Bernardo. "So you recognized me?"

"Yes," replied the nun.

"At the Holy Fountain?"

"At the Holy Fountain."

And Don Bernardo encircled the nun in his arms.

Anne made no effort to free herself from this loving embrace.

"Pray pardon me," asked Bernardo, "for I am mad with joy and happiness. What are you coming this way for?"

"I knew that you were here."

"And you were looking for me?"

"Yes."

"You know, then, that I love you?"

"I do."

"And you, do you love me?"

The lips of the nun remained closed.

"Oh, Niébla! Niébla! one word, one single word. In the name of our youth, in the name of my love, in the name of Christ, do you love me?"

"I have made vows," murmured the nun.

"Oh! what matter your vows?" exclaimed Don Bernardo. "Have I not made them also, and broken them as well?"

"I am dead to the world," said the pale *fiancée*.

"Were you dead to life, Niébla, I should resuscitate you."

"You will not make me live again," said Anne, shaking her head. "And as for me, Bernardo, I'll be the death of you."

"We had better sleep in the same tomb than die apart."

"Then what is your resolve, Bernardo?"

"To carry you off, to bear you away with me to the end of the world, if need be."

"When will that be?"

"This instant."

"The doors are shut."

"You are right. Are you free to-morrow?"

"I am always free."

"To-morrow night wait for me here at the same hour. I shall have a key to the church."

"I shall expect you; but will you come?"

"Ah! I swear to you upon my life. But you, what pledge do you give that you will keep your word?"

"Hold!" said she; "here is my chaplet."

And she tied her ivory chaplet around his neck.

At the same time Don Bernardo embraced Anne de Niébla, and with his two hands strained her to his heart. Their lips met and exchanged a kiss.

But instead of being ardent, like a first kiss of love, the contact with the lips of the nun was icy, and the cold which ran into the veins of Don Bernardo transfixed his heart.

"It is well," said Anne; "and now no human force shall be able to separate us any more. We'll meet again, Zuniga."

"Till we meet again, dear Anne. On to-morrow night?"

"On to-morrow night."

The nun released herself from her lover's arms, moving slowly from him, but keeping her head turned in his direction all the while until she entered the choir again and closed the door behind her.

Don Bernardo Zuniga allowed her to retire, but stood motionless in his place, with his arms stretched out toward her, and thought of withdrawing himself only after he had seen her disappear.

He put four benches side by side, placed four other benches across them, set a chair on top of these benches, and went out, as he had arranged before-hand, through the window. The grass was high and tufted, as is usually the case in cemeteries. He could jump, then, from the height of twelve feet without doing himself any harm.

He had no need to carry off the portrait of Anne de Nièbla, since the next day Anne de Niébla herself was going to be his own.

XIX.

HE LIVING DEAD.

DAY was beginning to dawn when Don Bernardo de Zuniga returned to get his horse from the inn where he had left it.

An inconceivable sense of discomfort had taken possession of him, and although wrapped up in his large cloak, he felt himself gradually chilled to the bone.

He asked the stable-boy to direct him to the locksmith who worked for the convent, and the boy instantly complied with his request.

He lived at the other end of the village.

Don Bernardo, in order to warm himself up, made his horse go on a full trot, and in a short time he heard the blows of the hammer resounding upon the anvil, and through the open windows and door he saw sparks from the red iron fly into the middle of the street.

Arrived at the door of the smithy, he got off his horse; but more and more penetrated by the cold, he was astonished at the automatic stiffness of his movements.

The locksmith, for his part, had remained with hammer uplifted, looking at that noble lord wrapped in his knightly mantle of the order of Alcantara, who was alighting at his door and entering his shop like any ordinary customer.

On discovering that it was indeed himself with whom he had to do, the locksmith laid his hammer upon the anvil, took off his cap, and asked, politely:

"What can I do for you, my lord?"

"You are locksmith to the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, are you not?" asked the knight.

"Yes, sir, I am," replied the locksmith.

"Have you the convent keys?"

"No, sir; only their models—so that if one of its keys be lost I might replace it."

"Very well. I want the church key."

"The church key?"

"Yes."

"Excuse me, sir; but it is my duty to ask what you intend to do with it."

"I want to mark my dogs to preserve them from madness."

"That is a seigniorial right. Are you master of the land on which the church is built?"

"I am Don Bernardo de Zuniga, son of Pierre de Zuniga, Count de Bagnarès, Marquis d'Ayamonte. I command a hundred men-at-arms, and am knight of Alcantara, as you can see by my mantle."

"That can not be," exclaimed the locksmith, with a visible expression of alarm.

"And why can not it be?"

"Because you are living as lively as can be, although you do seem to be cold, and Don Bernardo de Zuniga died last night about one o'clock in the morning."

"And who told you that fine news?" asked the knight.

"A squire bearing a cloak with the Béjar arms upon it, who passed just an hour ago on his way to order a funeral service to be held at the Convent of the Immaculate Conception."

Don Bernardo burst into a peal of laughter.

"Hold!" said he. "Meanwhile, here are ten pieces of

gold for your key. I'll come again for it this afternoon, and bring you as many more for it."

The locksmith bowed in token of assent. Twenty pieces of gold! Why, that was more than he had earned in a whole year, and well worth the risk of receiving a reprimand.

Besides, why should he be reprimanded? It was the custom to mark hunting-dogs with church keys to keep them from going mad. A gentleman who paid out his money so liberally, whatever else might be said of him, could not be a thief.

Don Bernardo once more mounted his horse. He had tried to warm himself at the forge, but had not succeeded. He hoped better things from the sun, that began to shine as brilliantly as it is apt to do in Spain in the month of March.

He gained the fields and set into running; but colder and colder he grew, cold chills shaking his whole frame and freezing his blood.

This was not all. It seemed as though he were chained to the convent, and he described a circle of which the church steeple formed the center.

In crossing a wood toward eleven o'clock he saw a workman who was planing some oak planks. This was a task that he had often seen done by workmen, and yet somehow he felt constrained to question that man in spite of himself.

"What are you doing there?" asked he of him.

"You see for yourself, noble sir," replied he.

"No; tell me, since I ask the question."

"Well, I am making a bier.

"Out of oak? It is for some great lord that you are working, then?"

"It is for the Chevalier Don Bernardo de Zuniga, son of Monseigneur Pierre de Zuniga, Count de Bagnarès, Marquis d'Ayamonte."

"The chevalier is dead, then, is he?"

"He died last night, about one o'clock in the morning," replied the workman.

"That is a fool," muttered the chevalier, shrugging his shoulders; and he went on his way.

Upon his return to the village where he had ordered the key, he met, toward one o'clock, a monk who was riding a mule, followed by a sacristan on foot.

The sacristan carried a crucifix and a vessel of holy water.

Don Bernardo had already drawn up his horse in order to let the holy man pass, when suddenly, bethinking himself, he made a sign with his hand that he would like to speak with him.

The monk stopped.

"Whence come you, father?" asked the knight.

"From the Château de Béjar, noble sir."

"From the Château de Béjar?" asked Don Bernardo, astonished.

"Yes."

"And, pray, what had you to do at the Château de Béjar?"

"I have been to hear the last confession and administer the holy sacrament to Don Bernardo de Zuniga, who, toward midnight, feeling death to be at hand, had me called that he might receive absolution for his sins; but although I had gone in all haste, still I arrived too late."

"How! Too late!"

"Yes; when I arrived I found Don Bernardo already dead."

"Already dead?" repeated the knight.

"Yes; and more than that, dead without confession. May God have pity on his soul!"

"What o'clock was it when he died?"

"About one o'clock at night," answered the monk.

"It is a wager," said the knight, with ill-humor, "these people have sworn to drive me mad."

And he spurred his horse into a gallop.

Ten minutes afterward he was at the door of the smithy.

"Oh! oh!" said the locksmith, "what is the matter with your lordship? You look so pale."

"I am cold," said Don Bernardo.

"Here is your key."

"Here is your gold."

And he threw twelve other pieces into his hands.

"Holy fathers!" said the smith, "where do you keep your money?"

"Why do you ask that?"

"Your gold is as cold as ice. While I think of it—"

"What is that you say?"

"Do not forget to make the sign of the cross three times before using the key."

"And why, pray?"

"Because when one forges a church key, the devil never fails to come and blow the fire."

"All right. And, for your part, do not forget to pray for the soul of Don Bernardo de Zuniga," said the knight, trying to smile.

"I'll surely remember," said the locksmith; "but am much afraid that my prayers will come too late, seeing that he is already dead."

Although Don Bernardo had received these different shocks with a calm air, and received these surprising answers with a smile, what he had seen and heard since morning had not failed to make a lively impression upon him, brave as he was. Above all, that coldness, that mortal coldness which kept increasing, paralyzing the very beating of his heart, and chilling the very marrow of his bones. He pressed with his feet upon the stirrups, and no longer felt the support that they lent him. He squeezed one hand with the other, but felt no conscious pressure.

Evening came with its breezes, that seemed to penetrate both his cloak and other garments as if neither had any more consistency than a cobweb.

Night having come, he entered the cemetery and fastened his horse to the foot of a plane-tree. He had not thought of eating all day long, either for himself or horse.

He lay down in the long grass to escape as much as possible from the cutting blast that was annihilating him. But hardly had he touched the ground before he felt much worse. That ground, full of atoms of death, seemed like a marble slab.

Gradually, no matter what effort he made to resist the cold, he fell into a sort of swoon, whence he was aroused by the noise two men made in digging a grave.

He made a mighty effort and lifted himself up on his elbow.

The two grave-diggers, who saw a man apparently issue from a grave, uttered a shriek.

"Oh! Well, to be sure!" said he to the grave-diggers, "I thank you for having waked me. It was high time."

"You may well thank us, sir, for when one goes to sleep here one hardly ever wakes up again."

"And what are you doing in this cemetery at such an hour?"

"You can see for yourself."

"Are you digging a grave?"

"Certainly we are."

"And for whom?"

"For Don Bernardo de Zuniga."

"For Don Bernardo de Zuniga?"

"Yes. It seems that this worthy lord, in the will that he made fifteen days or three weeks ago, desired to be buried in the cemetery of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, so that they only came to us this evening to set us at the task. Now the question is to make up for lost time."

"And when did he die?"

"Last night, at one o'clock in the morning. There! Now the grave is dug, and Don Bernardo may come as soon as he pleases. Farewell, sir."

"Wait," said the knight. "All labor deserves to be rewarded. Hold! here is something for you and your comrade."

And he threw on the ground seven or eight pieces of gold that the grave-diggers made haste to pick up.

"Holy Virgin!" said one of the grave-diggers, "I do hope that the wine which we are going to quaff to your good health will not be as cold as your money, for, if so, it were enough to freeze the soul in the body."

And they left the grave-yard.

Half past eleven had just struck. Don Bernardo walked for a half hour longer, having the greatest trouble in the world to keep himself up, so stagnant seemed the blood in his veins. At last midnight sounded.

At the first stroke of the bell Don Bernardo introduced the key into the lock and opened the door.

The astonishment of the knight was great. The church was lighted up, the choir was open, the pillars and arches were hung with black, while hundreds of wax lights burned in the glowing chapel.

In the middle of the chapel a platform was raised, and on the platform was lying a nun dressed in white, wearing upon her head a great white veil held in place by a crown of white roses.

A singular presentiment weighed down the heart of the

knight. He drew near the platform, leaned over the corpse, raised the veil, and uttered a cry.

It was the corpse of Anna de Niébla.

He turned and looked around him, seeking whom he could question, and perceived the sacristan.

"What corpse is that?" asked he.

"That of Anna de Niébla," replied the good man.

"How long has she been dead?"

"Since Sunday morning."

Don Bernardo felt the cold continually increasing that was freezing his vitals, although he would have believed that impossible.

He passed his hand over his brow.

"Was she dead, then, at twelve o'clock last night?"

"Certainly she was."

"Where was she at twelve o'clock last night?"

"Where she is to-night at the same hour; only the church was not hung, the wax tapers of the cenotaph were lighted, and the choir railing was closed."

"Then," continued the knight, "any one who had seen Anne de Niébla come toward him here at that hour would have seen a phantom? Any one who had spoken to her, then, would have spoken to a ghost?"

"God preserve a Christian from such a misfortune; but he would have spoken to a phantom and seen a ghost."

Don Bernardo tottered. He understood it all now. He had given his troth to a phantom, he had received the kiss of a specter.

This was why that kiss had been so cold; this was why a river of ice was flowing through his whole body.

At the same moment there recurred to his mind that announcement of his own death which had been given by the locksmith, the joiner, the priest, and the grave-digger.

They had told him that he died at one o'clock.

It was at one o'clock that he had received the kiss of Anne de Niébla.

Was he dead or alive?

Had separation of soul and body already taken place?

Was this his soul that was wandering about in the environs of the Convent of the Immaculate Conception, while his dead body was lying in the Castle of Béjar?

He threw back the veil that he had lifted from the face

of the dead, and rushed out of the church. Vertigo had seized him.

The clock struck one.

With bowed head and oppressed spirit Don Bernardo rushed into the cemetery, stumbled over the open grave, picked himself up, unloosed his horse, leaped into the saddle, and dashed off in the direction of the Castle of Béjar.

There alone could be solved the terrible enigma of whether he were alive or dead.

But a strange thing! His sensations are almost extinct. The horse who bears him he can hardly feel between his legs; the only impression of which he is sensible is that ever-increasing cold which is gradually benumbing his whole being.

He spurs on his horse, which likewise appears to be a spectral horse. It seems to him that his mane lengthens, that his feet do not touch the ground any more, and that his gallop has ceased to awaken any sound.

Suddenly on his right and left two black dogs rise up, without noise or barking; their eyes are of flame and their throats the color of blood.

They run alongside of the horse with flaming eyes and gaping jaws; no more than the horse do they touch the ground; horse and dogs skim the surface of the ground; they do not run, they fly.

All the objects that skirt the road disappear from the eyes of the knight as though borne upon the wings of a hurricane. Finally, in the distance, he descries the turrets, walls, and doors of the Castle of Béjar.

There all his doubts were to be cleared up. He urges forward his horse, too, accompanied by the dogs and pursued by the bell.

For his part, the castle seemed to come to meet him. The gate was open; the knight reached forward; he cleared the threshold, and was in the yard.

Nobody paid any heed to him, and yet the yard was full of people.

He spoke, and nobody answered him; he questioned, but nobody saw him; he touched, but nobody felt his touch.

At that moment a herald appeared upon the front steps.

"Hear! hear! hear!" said he. "The body of Don Bernardo de Zuniga is going to be conveyed, according to the wish expressed in his will, to the cemetery of the Con-

vent of the Immaculate Conception. Let those who have the right to sprinkle him with holy water follow me."

And he entered the castle.

The knight wanted to pursue his journey to the end, and let himself glide down from his steed, but he no longer felt the ground beneath his feet, and fell on his knees, trying to clutch with his hand his horse's stirrups.

At that moment the two black dogs seized him by the throat and strangled him.

He wanted to utter a cry, but had not the strength. Hardly could he breathe forth a sigh.

Those present saw two dogs that seemed to fight something between them, while the horse vanished like a shadow.

They wanted to strike at the dogs, but they only parted when they had accomplished the invisible task that they had set themselves.

Then, side by side, they dashed out of the yard and disappeared.

On the spot where they had stayed ten minutes, shapeless *débris* were found, and among this *débris* the chaplet of Anne de Niébla.

At that moment the body of Don Bernardo de Zuniga appeared at the front door, borne by pages and the squires of the castle.

Next day it was buried with great pomp in the cemetery of the Immaculate Conception, side by side with his cousin, Anna de Niébla. God have mercy upon their souls!

I was just finishing the perusal of this story when my guide reappeared.

"What manuscript is this?" asked I of him.

"This manuscript?"

And he looked at it.

"My faith! I know nothing about it," said he.

"You ought to know, however, for it fell from your pocket as you moved away."

"Really?"

"Yes."

"In that case, it must have formed a part of the baggage of a scholar who crossed the Sierra three weeks ago."

"And he was going?"

"From Malaga to Seville, I believe."

"You do not know his name?"

"My faith! No. Do you want anything of him?"

"I should like to ask his permission to translate this legend."

"I give it you."

"How! You give it to me?"

"Yes."

"By what title?"

The Torero began to laugh.

"By title of universal legatee," said he.

"He is dead, then?"

"And buried."

Then, seeing that I looked at him as if I had not perfectly comprehended:

"The third cross to the right as you return to Cordova," said he.

Then suddenly hiding himself behind a bush:

"Look out! Look out! The wild boar!" cried he. "The hunt has begun!"

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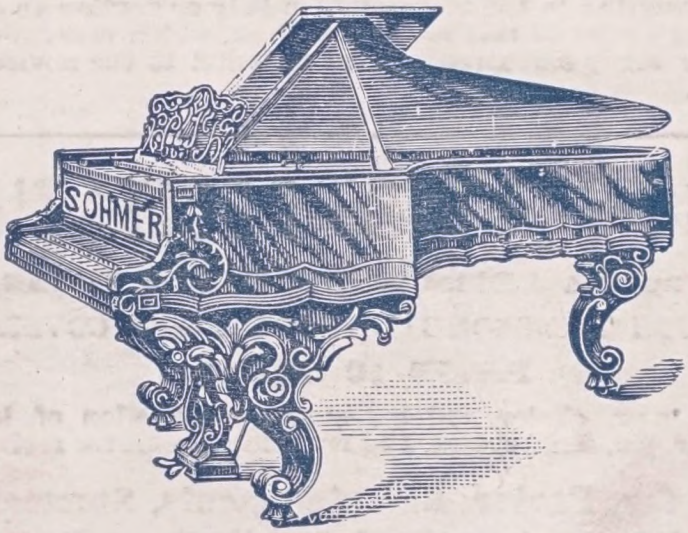

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